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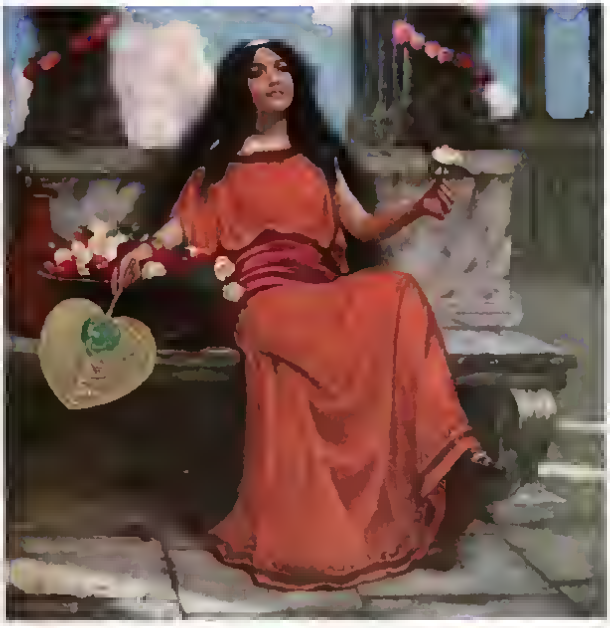

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THE CURE FOR LOVE.

A STORY OF THE DAYS TO COME.

(Anno Domini 2000.)

THE excellent Mr Morris was an Englishman, and he lived in the days of Queen Victoria the Good. He was a prosperous and very sensible man, he read the *Times* and went to church, and as he grew towards middle age an expression of quiet contented contempt for all who were not as himself settled on his face. He was one of those people who do everything that is right and proper and sensible with inevitable regularity. He always wore just the right and proper clothes, steering the narrow way between the smart and the shabby, always subscribed to the right charities, just the judicious compromise between ostentation and meanness, and never failed to have his hair cut to exactly the proper length.

Everything that it was right and proper for a man in his position to possess, he possessed, and everything that it was not right and proper for a man in his position to possess, he did not possess.

And among other right and proper possessions, this Mr Morris had a wife and children. They were the right sort of wife, and the right sort and number of children, of course, nothing imaginative or highty-flighty about any of them, so far as Mr Morris could see; they wore perfectly correct clothing, neither smart nor hygienic nor faddy in any way, but just sensible, and they lived in a nice sensible house in the later Victorian sham Queen Anne style of architecture, with sham half-timbering of chocolate-painted plaster in the gables, Lincrusta Walton sham carved oak panels, a terrace of terra cotta to imitate stone, and cathedral glass in the front door. His boys went to good solid schools, and were put to respectable professions, his girls, in spite of a fantastic protest or so, were all married to suitable, steady, oldish young men with good prospects. And when it was a fit and proper thing for him to do so, Mr Morris died. His tomb was of marble, and, without any art nonsense or laudatory inscription, quietly imposing—such being the fashion of his time.

He underwent various changes according to the accepted custom in these cases, and long before this story begins his bones even had become dust, and were scattered to the four quarters of heaven. And his sons and his grandsons and

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his great-grandsons and his great-great-grandsons, they too were dust and ashes, and were scattered likewise. It was a thing he could not have imagined, that a day would come when even his great-great-grandsons would be scattered to the four winds of heaven. If any one had suggested it to him he would have resented it. He was one of those worthy people who take no interest in the future of mankind at all. He had grave doubts, indeed, if there was any future for mankind after he was dead. It seemed quite impossible and quite uninteresting to imagine anything happening after he was dead. Yet the thing was so, and when even his great-great-grandson was dead and decayed and forgotten, when the sham half-timbered house had gone the way of all shams, and the *Times* was extinct, and the silk hat a ridiculous antiquity, and the modestly imposing stone that had been sacred to Mr. Morris had been burnt to make lime for mortar, and all that Mr. Morris had found real and important was sere and dead, the world was still going on, and people were still going about it, just as heedless and impatient of the future, or, indeed, of anything but their own selves and property, as Mr. Morris had been.

And, strange to tell, and much as Mr. Morris would have been angered if any one had foreshadowed it to him, all over the world there were scattered a multitude of people, filled with the breath of life, in whose veins the blood of Mr. Morris flowed. Just as some day the life which is gathered now in the reader of this very story may also be scattered far and wide about this world, and mingled with a thousand alien strains, beyond all thought and tracing.

And among the descendants of this Mr. Morris was one almost as sensible and clear-headed as his ancestor. He had just the same stout, short frame as that ancient man of the nineteenth century from whom his name of Morris—he spelt it Mwres—came; he had the same half-contemptuous expression of face. He was a prosperous person, too, as times went, and he disliked the "new-fangled," and bothers about the future and the lower classes, just as much as the ancestral Morris had done. He did not read the *Times*: indeed, he did not know there ever had been a *Times*—that institution had foundered somewhere in the intervening gulf of years; but the phonograph machine, that talked to him as he made his toilet of a morning, might have been the voice of a reincarnated Blowitz when it dealt with the world's affairs. This phonographic machine was the size and shape of a Dutch clock, and down the front of it were electric barometric indicators, and an electric clock and calendar, and automatic engagement reminders, and where the clock would have been was the mouth of a trumpet. When it had news the trumpet gobbled like a turkey, "Galloop, galloop," and then brayed out its message as, let us say, a trumpet might bray. It would tell Mwres in full, rich, throaty tones about the overnight accidents to the omnibus flying machines that plied around the world, the latest arrivals at the fashionable resorts in Tibet, and of all the great monopolist company meetings of the day before, while he was dressing. If Mwres did not like hearing what it said, he had only to touch a stud, and it would choke a little and talk about something else.

Of course his toilet differed very much from that of his ancestor. It is doubtful which would have been the more shocked and pained to find himself in the clothing of the other. Mwres would certainly have sooner gone forth to the world stark naked than in the silk hat, frock coat, grey trousers and watch-chain that had filled Mr. Morris with sombre self-respect in the past. For Mwres there was no shaving to do: a skilful operator had long ago removed every hair-root from his face. His legs he encased in pleasant pink and amber garments of an air-tight material, which with the help of an ingenious little pump he distended so

as to suggest enormous muscles. Above this he also wore pneumatic garments beneath an amber silk tunic, so that he was clothed in air and admirably protected against sudden extremes of heat or cold. Over this he flung a scarlet cloak with its edge fantastically curved. On his head, which had been skilfully deprived of every scrap of hair, he adjusted a pleasant little cap of bright scarlet, held on by suction and inflated with hydrogen, and curiously like the comb of a cock. So his toilet was complete; and, conscious of being soberly and becomingly attired, he was ready to face his fellow-beings with a tranquil eye.

This Mwres—the civility of "Mr." had vanished ages ago—was one of the officials under the Wind Vane and Waterfall Trust, the great company that owned every wind wheel and waterfall in the world, and which pumped all the water and supplied all the electric energy that people in these latter days required. He lived in a vast hotel near that part of London called Seventh Way, and had very large and comfortable apartments on the seventeenth floor. Households and family life had long since disappeared with the progressive refinement of manners; and indeed the steady rise in rents and land values, the disappearance of domestic servants, the elaboration of cookery, had rendered the separate domicile of Victorian times impossible, even had any one desired such a savage seclusion. When his toilet was completed he went towards one of the two doors of his apartment—there were doors at opposite ends, each marked with a huge arrow pointing one one way and one the other—touched a stud to open it, and emerged on a wide passage, the centre of which bore chairs and was moving at a steady pace to the left. On some of these chairs were seated gaily dressed men and women. He nodded to an acquaintance—it was not in those days etiquette to talk before breakfast—and seated himself on one of these chairs, and in a few seconds he had been carried to the doors of a lift, by which he descended to the great and splendid hall in which his breakfast would be automatically served.

It was a very different meal from a Victorian breakfast. The rude masses of bread needing to be carved and smeared over with animal fat before they could be made palatable, the still recognisable fragments of recently killed animals, hideously charred and hacked, the eggs torn ruthlessly from beneath some protesting hen,—such things as these, though they constituted the ordinary fare of Victorian times, would have awakened only horror and disgust in the refined minds of the people of these latter days. Instead were pastes and cakes of agreeable and variegated design, without any suggestion in colour or form of the unfortunate animals from which their substance and juices were derived. They appeared on little dishes sliding out upon a rail from a little box at one side of the table. The surface of the table, to judge by touch and eye, would have appeared to a nineteenth-century person to be covered with fine white damask, but this was really an oxidised metallic surface, and could be cleaned instantly after a meal. There were hundreds of such little tables in the hall, and at most of them were other latter-day citizens singly or in groups. And as Mwres seated himself before his elegant repast, the invisible orchestra, which had been resting during an interval, resumed and filled the air with music.

But Mwres did not display any great interest either in his breakfast or the music; his eye wandered incessantly about the hall, as though he expected a belated guest. At last he rose eagerly and waved his hand, and simultaneously across the hall appeared a tall dark figure in a costume of yellow and olive green. As this person, walking amidst the tables with measured steps, drew near, the pallid earnestness of his face and the unusual intensity of his eyes became apparent. Mwres reseated himself and pointed to a chair beside him.

"I feared you would never come," he said. In spite of the intervening space of time, the English language was still almost exactly the same as it had been in England under Victoria the Good. The invention of the phonograph and suchlike means of recording sound, and the gradual replacement of books by such contrivances, had not only saved the human eyesight from decay, but had also by the establishment of a sure standard arrested the process of change in accent that had hitherto been so inevitable.

"I was delayed by an interesting case," said the man in green and yellow. "A prominent politician—ahem!—suffering from overwork." He glanced at the breakfast and seated himself. "I have been awake for forty hours."

"Eh dear!" said Mwres. "fancy that! You hypnotists have your work to do"

The hypnotist helped himself to some attractive amber-coloured jelly. "I happen to be a good deal in request," he said modestly.

"Heaven knows what we should do without you."

"Oh! we're not so indispensable as all that," said the hypnotist, ruminating the flavour of the jelly "The world did very well without us for some thousands of years. Two hundred years ago even—not one! In practice, that is. Physicians by the thousand, of course—frightfully clumsy brutes for the most part, and following one another like sheep—but doctors of the mind, except a few empirical flounderers there were none."

He concentrated his mind on the jelly.

"But were people so sane——?" began Mwres.

The hypnotist shook his head. "It didn't matter then if they were a bit silly or faddy. Life was so easy-going then. No competition worth speaking of—no pressure. A human being had to be very lopsided before anything happened. Then, you know, they clapped 'em away in what they called a lunatic asylum."

"I know," said Mwres. "In these confounded historical romances that every one is listening to, they always rescue a beautiful girl from an asylum or something of the sort. I don't know if you attend to that rubbish."

"I must confess I do," said the hypnotist. "It carries one out of oneself to hear of those quaint, adventurous, half-civilised days of the nineteenth century, when men were stout and women simple. I like a good swaggering story before all things. Curious times they were, with their smutty railways and puffing old iron trams, their rum little houses and their horse vehicles. I suppose you don't read books?"

"Dear, no!" said Mwres; "I went to a modern school and we had none of that old-fashioned nonsense. Phonographs are good enough for me."

"Of course," said the hypnotist, "of course"; and surveyed the table for his next choice. "You know," he said, helping himself to a dark blue confection that promised well, "in those days our business was scarcely thought of. I daresay if any one had told them that in two hundred years' time a class of men would be entirely occupied in impressing things upon the memory, effacing unpleasant ideas, controlling and overcoming instinctive but undesirable impulses, and so forth, by means of hypnotism, they would have refused to believe the thing possible. Few people knew that an order made during a mesmeric trance, even an order to forget or an order to desire, could be given so as to be obeyed after the trance was over. Yet there were men alive then who could have told them the thing was as absolutely certain to come about as—well, the transit of Venus."

"They knew of hypnotism, then?"

"Oh dear, yes! They used it—for painless dentistry and things like that! This blue stuff is confoundedly good! what is it?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," said Mwres, "but I admit it's very good. Take some more."

The hypnotist repeated his praises, and there was an appreciative pause.

"Speaking of these historical romances," said Mwres, with an attempt at an easy, off-hand manner, "brings me—ah—to the matter I—ah—had in mind when I asked you—when I expressed a wish to see you." He paused and took a deep breath.

The hypnotist turned an attentive eye upon him, and continued eating.

"The fact is," said Mwres, "I have a—in fact a—daughter. Well, you know I have given her—ah—every educational advantage. Lectures—not a solitary lecturer of ability in the world but she has had a telephone direct, dancing, deportment, conversation, philosophy, art criticism . . ." He indicated catholic culture by a gesture of his hand. "I had intended her to marry a very good friend of mine—Bindon of the Lighting Commission—plain little man, you know, and a bit unpleasant in some of his ways, but an excellent fellow really—an excellent fellow."

"Yes," said the hypnotist, "go on. How old is she?"

"Eighteen."

"A dangerous age. Well?"

"Well, it seems that she has been indulging in these historical romances—excessively. Excessively. Even to the neglect of her philosophy. Filled her mind with unutterable nonsense about soldiers who fight—what is it?—Etruscans?"

"Egyptians."

"Egyptians—very probably. Hack about with swords and revolvers and things—bloodshed galore—horrible!—and about young men on torpedo catchers who blow up—Spaniards, I fancy—and all sorts of irregular adventurers. And she has got it into her head that she must marry for Love, and that poor little Bindon——"

"I've met similar cases," said the hypnotist. "Who is the other young man?"

Mwres maintained an appearance of resigned calm. "You may well ask," he said. "He is"—and his voice sank with shame—"a mere attendant upon the stage on which the flying-machines from Paris alight. He has—as they say in the romances—good looks. He is quite young and very eccentric. Affects the antique—he can read and write! So can she. And instead of communicating by telephone, like sensible people, they write and deliver—what is it?"

"Notes?"

"No—not notes. . . . Ah—poems."

The hypnotist raised his eyebrows. "How did she meet him?"

"Tripped coming down from the flying machine from Paris—and fell into his arms. The mischief was done in a moment!"

"Yes?"

"Well—that's all. Things must be stopped. That is what I want to consult you about. What must be done? What *can* be done? Of course I'm not a hypnotist; my knowledge is limited. But you——?"

"Hypnotism is not magic," said the man in green, putting both arms on the table.

"Oh, precisely! But still——"

"People cannot be hypnotised without their consent. If she is able to stand out against marrying Bindon, she will probably stand out against being hypnotised. But if once she can be hypnotised—even by somebody else—the thing is done."

"You can——?"

"Oh, certainly! Once we get her amenable, then we can suggest that she *must* marry Bindon—that that is her fate, or that the young man is repulsive, and

that when she sees him she will be giddy and faint, or any little thing of that sort. Or if we can get her into a sufficiently profound trance we can suggest that she should forget him altogether."

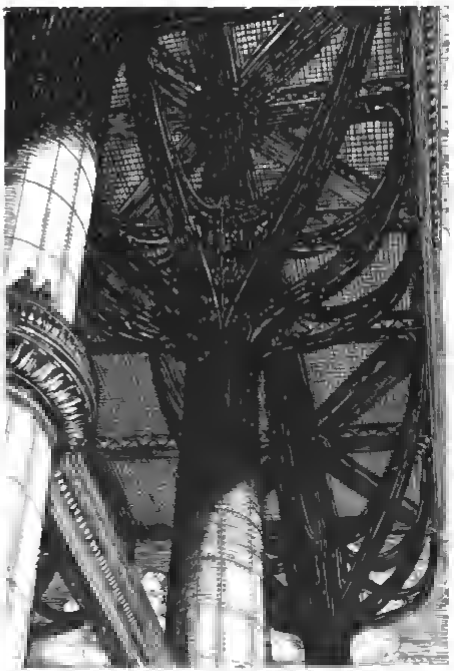
"Precisely."

"But the problem is to get her hypnotised. Of course no sort of proposal or suggestion must come from you — because no doubt she already distrusts you in the matter."

The hypnotist leant his head upon his arm and thought.

"It's hard a man cannot dispose of his own daughter," said Mwres irrelevantly.

"You must give me the name and address of the young lady," said the hypnotist, "and any information bearing upon the matter. And, by-the-bye, is there any money in the affair?"



"She was sitting in a quiet waiting-place beneath the great stage . . . and beside her sat her slender, handsome lover."

"There's a sum—in fact, a considerable sum—invested in the Patent Road Company. From her mother. That's what makes the thing so exasperating."

"Exactly," said the hypnotist. And he proceeded to cross-examine Mwres on the entire affair.

It was a lengthy interview.

And meanwhile "Elizebe0 Mwres," as she spelt her name, or "Elizabeth Morris" as a nineteenth-century person would have put it, was sitting in a quiet waiting-place beneath the great stage upon which the flying-machine from Paris descended. And beside her sat her slender, handsome lover reading her the poem he had written that morning while on duty upon the stage. When he had finished they sat for a time in silence; and then, as if for their special entertainment, the great machine that had come flying through the air from America that morning rushed down out of the sky.

Mwres hesitated.

At first it was a little oblong, faint and blue amidst the distant fleecy clouds;

and then it grew swiftly large and white, and larger and whiter, until they could see the separate tiers of sails, each hundreds of feet wide, and the lank body they supported, and at last even the swinging seats of the passengers in a dotted row. Although it was falling it seemed to them to be rushing up the sky, and over the roof-spaces of the city below its shadow leapt towards them. They heard the whistling rush of the air about it and its yelling siren, shrill and swelling, to warn those who were on its landing stage of its arrival. And abruptly the note fell down a couple of octaves, and it had passed, and the sky was clear and void, and she could turn her sweet eyes again to Denton at her side.

Their silence ended; and Denton, speaking in a little language of broken English that was, they fancied, their private possession—though lovers have used such little languages since the world began—told her how they too would leap into the air one morning out of all the obstacles and difficulties about them, and fly to a sunlight city of delight he knew of in Japan, half way about the world.

"The great machine that had come flying through the air from America that morning rushed down out of the sky."

She loved the dream, but she feared the leap; and she put him off with "Some day, dearest one, some day," to all his pleading that it might be soon; and at last came a shrilling of whistles, and it was time for him to go back to his duties on the stage. They parted—as lovers have been wont to part for thousands of years. She walked down a passage to a lift, and so came to one of the streets of that latter day London, all glazed in with glass from

the weather, and with incessant moving platforms that went to all parts of the city. And by one of these she returned to her apartments in the Hotel for Women where she lived, the apartments that were in telephonic communication with all the best lecturers in the world. But the sunlight of the flying stages was in her heart, and the wisdom of all the best lecturers in the world seemed folly in that light.

She spent the middle part of the day in the gymnasium, and took her midday meal with two other girls and their common chaperone—for it was still the custom to have a chaperone in the case of motherless girls of the more prosperous classes. The chaperone had a visitor that day, a man in green and yellow, with a white face and vivid eyes, who talked amazingly. Among other things, he fell to praising a new historical romance that one of the great popular story-tellers of the day had just put forth. It was, of course, about the spacious times of Queen Victoria; and the author, among other pleasing novelties, made a little argument before each section of the story, in imitation of the chapter headings of the old-fashioned books—as for example, "How the Cabmen of Pimlico stopped the Victoria Omnibuses, and of the Great Fight in Palace Yard," and "How the Piccadilly Policeman was slain in the midst of his Duty." The man in green and yellow praised this innovation. "These pithy sentences," he said, "are admirable." They show at a glance those headlong, tumultuous times, when men and animals jostled in the filthy streets, and death might wait for one at every corner. Life was life then! How great the world must have seemed then! How marvellous! There were still parts of the world absolutely unexplored. Nowadays we have almost abolished wonder, we lead lives so trim and orderly that courage, endurance, faith, all the noble virtues seem fading from mankind."

And so on, taking the girls' thoughts with him, until the life they led, life in the vast and intricate London of the twenty-second century, a life interspersed with soaring excursions to every part of the globe, seemed to them a monotonous misery compared with the dædal past.

At first Elizabeth did not join in the conversation, but after a time the subject became so interesting that she made a few shy interpolations. But he scarcely seemed to notice her as he talked. He went on to describe a new method of entertaining people. They were hypnotised, and then suggestions were made to them so skilfully that they seemed to be living in ancient times again. They played out a little romance in the past as vivid as reality, and when at last they awakened they remembered all they had been through as though it were a real thing.

"It is a thing we have sought to do for years and years," said the hypnotist. "It is practically an artificial dream. And we know the way at last. Think of all it opens out to us—the enrichment of our experience, the recovery of adventure, the refuge it offers from this sordid, competitive life in which we live! Think!"

"And you can do that!" said the chaperone eagerly.

"The thing is possible at last," the hypnotist said. "You may order a dream as you wish."

The chaperone was the first to be hypnotised, and the dream, she said, was wonderful, when she came to again.

The other two girls, encouraged by her enthusiasm, also placed themselves in the hands of the hypnotist and had plunges into the romantic past. No one suggested that Elizabeth should try this novel entertainment; it was at her own request at last that she was taken into that land of dreams where there is neither any freedom of choice nor will . . .

And so the mischief was done.

One day, when Denton went down to that quiet seat beneath the flying stage, Elizabeth was not in her wonted place. He was disappointed, and a little angry. The next day she did not come, and the next also. He was afraid. To hide his fear from himself, he set to work to write sonnets for her when she should come again . .

For three days he fought against his dread by such distraction, and then the

"It was at her own request that she was taken into that land of dreams where there is neither any freedom of choice nor will."

truth was before him clear and cold, and would not be denied. She might be ill, she might be dead; but he would not believe that he had been betrayed. There followed a week of misery. And then he knew she was the only thing on earth worth having, and that he must seek her, however hopeless the search, until she was found once more.

He had some small private means of his own, and so he threw over his appointment on the flying stage, and set himself to find this girl who had become at last all the world to him. He did not know where she lived, and little of her

circumstances, for it had been part of the delight of her girlish romance that he should know nothing of her, nothing of the difference of their station. The ways of the city opened before him east and west, north and south. Even in Victorian days London was a maze, that little London with its poor four millions of people; but the London he explored, the London of the twenty-second century, was a London of thirty million souls. At first he was energetic and headlong, taking time neither to eat nor sleep. He sought for weeks and months, he went through every imaginable phase of fatigue and despair, over-excitement and anger. Long after hope was dead, by the sheer inertia of his desire he still went to and fro, peering into faces and looking this way and that, in the incessant ways and lifts and passages of that interminable hive of men.

At last chance was kind to him, and he saw her.

It was in a time of festivity. He was hungry; he had paid the inclusive fee and had gone into one of the gigantic dining-places of the city; he was pushing his way among the tables and scrutinising by mere force of habit every group he passed.

He stood still, robbed of all power of motion, his eyes wide, his lips apart. Elizabeth sat scarcely twenty yards away from him, looking straight at him. Her eyes were as hard to him, as hard and expressionless and void of recognition, as the eyes of a statue.

She looked at him for a moment, and then her gaze passed beyond him.

Had he had only her eyes to judge by he might have doubted if it was indeed Elizabeth, but he knew her by the gesture of her hand, by the grace of a wanton little curl that floated over her ear as she moved her head. Something was said to her, and she turned smiling tolerantly to the man beside her, a little man in foolish raiment knobbed and spiked like some odd reptile with pneumatic horns—the Bindon of her father's choice.

For a moment Denton stood white and wild-eyed; then came a terrible faintness, and he sat before one of the little tables. He sat down with his back to her, and for a time he did not dare to look at her again. When at last he did, she and Bindon and two other people were standing up to go. The others were her father and her chaperone.

He sat as if incapable of action until the four figures were remote and small, and then he rose up possessed with the one idea of pursuit. For a space he feared he had lost them, and then he came upon Elizabeth and her chaperone again in one of the streets of moving platforms that intersected the city. Bindon and Mwres had disappeared.

He could not control himself to patience. He felt he must speak to her forthwith, or die. He pushed forward to where they were seated, and sat down beside them. His white face was convulsed with half hysterical excitement.

He laid his hand on her wrist. "Elizabeth?" he said.

She turned in unfeigned astonishment. Nothing but the fear of a strange man showed in her face.

"Elizabeth!" he cried, and his voice was strange to him. "dearest—you *know* me?"

Elizabeth's face showed nothing but alarm and perplexity. She drew herself away from him. The chaperone, a little grey-headed woman with mobile features, leant forward to intervene. Her resolute bright eyes examined Denton. "*What* do you say?" she asked.

"This young lady," said Denton,—"she knows me."

"Do you know him, dear?"

"No," said Elizabeth in a strange voice, and with a hand to her forehead,

speaking almost as one who repeats a lesson. "No, I do not know him. I *know*—I do not know him."

"But—but . . . Not know me! It is I—Denton. Denton! To whom you used to talk. Don't you remember the flying stages? The little seat in the open air? The verses——"

"No," cried Elizabeth,—"no. I do not know him I do not know him. There is something . . . But I don't know. All I know is that I do not know him." Her face was a face of infinite distress

The sharp eyes of the chaperone flitted to and fro from the girl to the man. "You see?" she said, with the faint shadow of a smile. "She does not know you"

"I do not know you," said Elizabeth. "Of that I am sure."

"But, dear—the songs—the little verses——"

"She does not know you," said the chaperone. "You must not . . . You have made a mistake. You must not go on talking to us after that. You must not annoy us on the public ways."

"But——" said Denton, and for a moment his miserably haggard face appealed against fate.

"You must not persist, young man," protested the chaperone.

"*Elizabeth!*" he cried.

Her face was the face of one who is tormented. "I do not know you," she cried, hand to brow. "Oh, I do not know you!"

For an instant Denton sat stunned. Then he stood up and groaned aloud.

He made a strange gesture of appeal towards the remote glass roof of the public way, then turned and went plunging recklessly from one moving platform to another, and vanished amidst the swarms of people going to and fro thereon. The chaperone's eyes followed him, and then she looked at the curious faces about her.

"Dear," asked Elizabeth, clasping her hand, and too deeply moved to heed observation, "who was that man? Who *was* that man?"

The chaperone raised her eyebrows. She spoke in a clear, audible voice. "Some half-witted creature. I have never set eyes on him before."

"Never?"

"Never, dear. Do not trouble your mind about a thing like this."

And soon after this the celebrated hypnotist who dressed in green and yellow had another client. The young man paced his consulting room, pale and disordered. "I want to forget," he cried. "I *must* forget."

The hypnotist watched him with quiet eyes, studied his face and clothes and bearing. "To forget anything—pleasure or pain—is to be, by so much—*less*. However, you know your own concern. My fee is high"

"If only I can forget——"

"That's easy enough with you. You wish it. I've done much harder things. Quite recently. I hardly expected to do it: the thing was done against the will of the hypnotised person. A love affair too—like yours. A girl. So rest assured."

The young man came and sat beside the hypnotist. His manner was a forced calm. He looked into the hypnotist's eyes. "I will tell you. Of course you will want to know what it is. There was a girl. Her name was Elizabeth Mwres. Well . . ."

He stopped. He had seen the instant surprise on the hypnotist's face. In that instant he knew. He stood up. He seemed to dominate the seated figure by his side. He gripped the shoulder of green and gold. For a time he could not find words.

"*Give her me back!*" he said at last. "Give her me back!"

"What do you mean?" gasped the hypnotist.

"Give her me back."

"Give whom?"

"Elizabeth Mwres—the girl——"

The hypnotist tried to free himself; he rose to his feet. Denton's grip tightened.

"Let go!" cried the hypnotist, thrusting an arm against Denton's chest.

In a moment the two men were locked in a clumsy wrestle. Neither had the slightest training—for athleticism, except for exhibition and to afford opportunity for betting, had faded out of the earth—but Denton was not only the younger but the stronger of the two. They swayed across the room, and then the hypnotist had gone down under his antagonist. They fell together. . . .

Denton leaped to his feet, dismayed at his own fury; but the hypnotist lay still, and suddenly from a little white mark where his forehead had struck a stool shot a hurrying band of red. For a space Denton stood over him irresolute, trembling.

A fear of the consequences entered his gently nurtured mind. He turned towards the door. "No," he said aloud, and came back to the middle of the room. Overcoming the instinctive repugnance of one who had seen no act of violence in all his life before, he knelt down beside his antagonist and felt his heart. Then he peered at the wound. He rose quietly and looked about him. He began to see more of the situation.

When presently the hypnotist recovered his senses, his head ached severely, his back was against Denton's knees and Denton was sponging his face.

The hypnotist did not speak. But presently he indicated by a gesture that in his opinion he had been sponged enough. "Let me get up," he said.

"Not yet," said Denton.

"You have assaulted me, you scoundrel!"

"We are alone," said Denton, "and the door is secure."

There was an interval of thought.

"Unless I sponge," said Denton, "your forehead will develop a tremendous bruise."

"You can go on sponging," said the hypnotist sulkily.

There was another pause.

"We might be in the Stone Age," said the hypnotist. "Violence! Struggle!"

"In the Stone Age no man dared to come between man and woman," said Denton.

The hypnotist thought again.

"What are you going to do?" he asked sulkily.

"While you were insensible I found the girl's address on your tablets. I did not know it before. I telephoned. She will be here soon. Then——"

"She will bring her chaperone."

"That is all right."

"But what——? I don't see. What do you mean to do?"

"I looked about for a weapon also. It is an astonishing thing how few weapons there are nowadays, if you consider that in the Stone Age men owned scarcely anything *but* weapons. I hit at last upon this lamp. I have wrenched off the wires and things, and I hold it so." He extended it over the hypnotist's shoulders. "With that I can quite easily smash your skull. I *will*—unless you do as I tell you."

"Violence is no remedy," said the hypnotist, quoting from the "Modern Man's Book of Moral Maxims."

"'I hit at last upon this lamp—I have wrenched off the wires and things—and I hold it so.'"

"It's an undesirable disease," said Denton.

"Well?"

"You will tell that chaperone you are going to order the girl to marry that knobby little brute with the red hair and ferrety eyes. I believe that's how things stand?"

"Yes—that's how things stand."

"And, pretending to do that, you will restore her memory of me."

"It's unprofessional."

"Look here! If I cannot have that girl I would rather die than not. I don't propose to respect your little fancies. If anything goes wrong you shall not live five minutes. This is a rude makeshift of a weapon, and it may quite conceivably be painful to kill you. But I will. It is unusual, I know, nowadays, to do things like this—mainly because there is so little in life that is worth being violent about."

"The chaperone will see you directly she comes——"

"I shall stand in that recess. Behind you."

The hypnotist thought. "You are a determined young man," he said, "and only half civilised. I have tried to do my duty to my client, but in this affair you seem likely to get your own way. . . ."

"You mean to deal straightly"

"I'm not going to risk having my brains scattered in a petty affair like this."

"And afterwards?"

"There is nothing a hypnotist or doctor hates so much as a scandal. I at least am no savage. I am annoyed. . . . But in a day or so I shall bear no malice. . . ."

"Thank you. And now that we understand each other, there is no necessity to keep you sitting any longer on the floor"

H. G. WELLS.

WHEN WE GROW OLD

WHEN we grow old, dear love, and from my eyes
The light and brilliance of my hot youth dies,
And all the fairness you are praising now
Casts but its wraith o'er lip and cheek and brow,
While one by one our golden visions flee—
I ask you—will you love me faithfully
When we grow old?

When time shall turn these sunny locks to gray,
From my trim form all beauty take away,
When grace and ease and elegance are gone
And nought is left Love's fires to feed upon,
You, whom I chose my king among all men,
Still your heart's queen, shall I be reigning then—
When we grow old?

God keep you ever happy by my side!
Though age may stem this fevered passion-tide,
When worn and weary down Life's vale we stray,
Be my heart's anchor as you are to-day;
Be my true love that shall the closer cling
Through all the changes coming years may bring,
Our faith upheld—count this our lasting gain
That we so live that Love undimmed remain
When we grow old!

ANNIE G. HOPKINS

THE VACANT COUNTRY.

A STORY OF THE DAYS TO COME.

(Anno Domini 2090.)

THE world, they say, changed more between the year 1800 and the year 1900 than it had done in the previous five hundred years. That century, the nineteenth century, was the dawn of a new epoch in the history of mankind—the epoch of the great cities, the end of the old order of country life.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the majority of mankind still lived upon the countryside, as their way of life had been for countless generations. All over the world they dwelt in little towns and villages then, and engaged either directly in agriculture, or in occupations that were of service to the agriculturist. They travelled rarely, and dwelt close to their work, because swift means of transit had not yet come. The few who travelled went either on foot, or in slow sailing-ships, or by means of jogging horses incapable of more than sixty miles a day. Think of it!—sixty miles a day. Here and there, in those sluggish times, a town grew a little larger than its neighbours, as a port or as a centre of government, but all the towns in the world with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants could be counted on a man's fingers. So it was in the beginning of the nineteenth century. By the end, the invention of railways, telegraphs, steamships, and complex agricultural machinery, had changed all these things: changed them beyond all hope of return. The vast shops, the varied pleasures, the countless conveniences of the larger towns were suddenly possible, and no sooner existed than they were brought into competition with the homely resources of the rural centres. Mankind were drawn to the cities by an overwhelming attraction. The demand for labour fell with the increase of machinery, the local markets were entirely superseded, and there was a rapid growth of the larger centres at the expense of the open country.

The flow of population townward was the constant preoccupation of Victorian writers. In Great Britain and New England, in India and China, the same thing was remarked: everywhere a few swollen towns were visibly replacing the ancient order. That this was an inevitable result of improved means of travel and transport—that, given swift means of transit, these things must be—was realised by few; and the most puerile schemes were devised to overcome the mysterious magnetism of the urban centres, and keep the people on the land.

Yet the developments of the nineteenth century were only the dawning of the new order. The first great cities of the new time were horribly inconvenient, darkened by smoky fogs, insanitary and noisy, but the discovery of new methods

"Railways and roads had vanished together"

of building, new methods of heating, changed all this Between 1900 and 2000 the march of change was still more rapid, and between 2000 and 2100 the continually accelerated progress of human invention made the reign of Victoria the Good seem at last an almost incredible vision of idyllic tranquil days

The introduction of railways was only the first step in that development of

those means of locomotion which finally revolutionised human life. By the year 2000 railways and roads had vanished together. The railways, robbed of their rails, had become weedy ridges and ditches upon the face of the world, the old roads, strange barbaric tracks of flint and soil, hammered by hand or rolled by rough iron rollers, strewn with miscellaneous filth, and cut by iron hoofs and wheels into ruts and puddles often many inches deep, had been replaced by patent tracks made of a substance called Eadhamite. This Eadhamite—it was named after its patentee—ranks with the invention of printing and steam as one of the epoch-making discoveries of the world's history.

When Eadham discovered the substance, he probably thought of it as a mere cheap substitute for indiarubber; it cost a few shillings a ton. But you can never tell all an invention will do. It was the genius of a man named Warming that pointed to the possibility of using it, not only for the tyres of wheels, but as a road substance, and who organised the enormous network of public ways that speedily covered the world.

These public ways were made with longitudinal divisions. On the outer on either side went foot cyclists and conveyances travelling at a less speed than twenty-five miles an hour; in the middle, motors capable of speed up to a hundred; and the inner, Warming (in the face of enormous ridicule) reserved for vehicles travelling at speeds of a hundred miles an hour and upward.

For ten years his inner ways were vacant. Before he died they were the most crowded of all, and vast light frameworks, with wheels of twenty and thirty feet in diameter, hurled along them at paces that year after year rose steadily towards two hundred miles an hour. And by the time this revolution was accomplished, a parallel revolution had transformed the ever-growing cities. Before the development of practical science the fogs and filth of Victorian times vanished. Electric heating replaced fires (in 2013 the lighting of a fire that did not absolutely consume its own smoke was made an indictable nuisance), and all the city ways, all public squares and places, were covered in with a recently invented glass-like substance. The roofing of London became practically continuous. Certain short-sighted and foolish legislation against tall buildings was abolished, and London, from a squat expanse of petty houses—feebly archaic in design—rose steadily towards the sky. To the municipal responsibility for water, light, and drainage, was added another, and that was ventilation.

But to tell of all the changes in human convenience that these two hundred years brought about, to tell of the long foreseen invention of flying, to describe how life in households was steadily supplanted by life in interminable hotels, how at last even those who were still concerned in agricultural work came to live in the towns and to go to and fro to their work every day, to describe how at last in all England only four towns remained, each with many millions of people, and how there were left no inhabited houses in all the countryside—to tell all this would need a big book. And this is not a book, but only a short story about two human beings whose petty comedy of joy and sorrow was played out amidst the conditions of that great age. They were two young people who had found that an ancient proverb of the course of true love still held true. They had been separated and reunited, and still they could not marry. For Denton—it was his only fault—had no money. Neither had Elizabeth until she was twenty-one, and as yet she was only eighteen. At twenty one all the property of her mother would come to her, for that was the custom of the time. She did not know that it was possible to anticipate her fortune, and Denton was far too delicate a lover to suggest such a thing. So things stuck hopelessly between them. Elizabeth said that she was very

unhappy, and that nobody understood her but Denton, and that when she was away from him she was wretched; and Denton said that his heart longed for her day and night. And they met as often as they could to enjoy the discussion of their sorrows.

They met one day at a little seat in a favourite corner upon his flying stage. The precise site of this meeting was where in Victorian times the road from Wimbledon came out upon the common. They were, however, five hundred feet above that point.

The flying stage was a huge fabric of interlacing girders rising to that height, and having a vast superficial area to receive the descending impact of the flying machines. It bore gigantic carriers on rails by which these inventions were flung into the air again. Their seat was in an unfrequented recess beneath the level of the upper surface, and it looked far over London. To convey the appearance of it all to a nineteenth-century reader would have been difficult. One would have had to tell him to think of the Crystal Palace, of the newly built "mammoth" hotels—as those little affairs were called—of the larger railway stations of his time, and to imagine such buildings enlarged to vast proportions and run together and continuous over the whole metropolitan area. If then he was told that this continuous roof-space bore a huge forest of rotating wind-wheels, he would have begun very dimly to appreciate what to these young people was the commonest sight in their lives.

To their eyes it had something of the quality of a prison, and they were talking, as they had talked a hundred times before, of how they might escape from it and be at last happy together. Escape from it, that is, before the appointed three years were at an end. It was, they both agreed, not only impossible, but almost wicked, to wait three years. "Before that," said Denton—and the notes of his voice told of a splendid chest—"*we might both be dead!*"

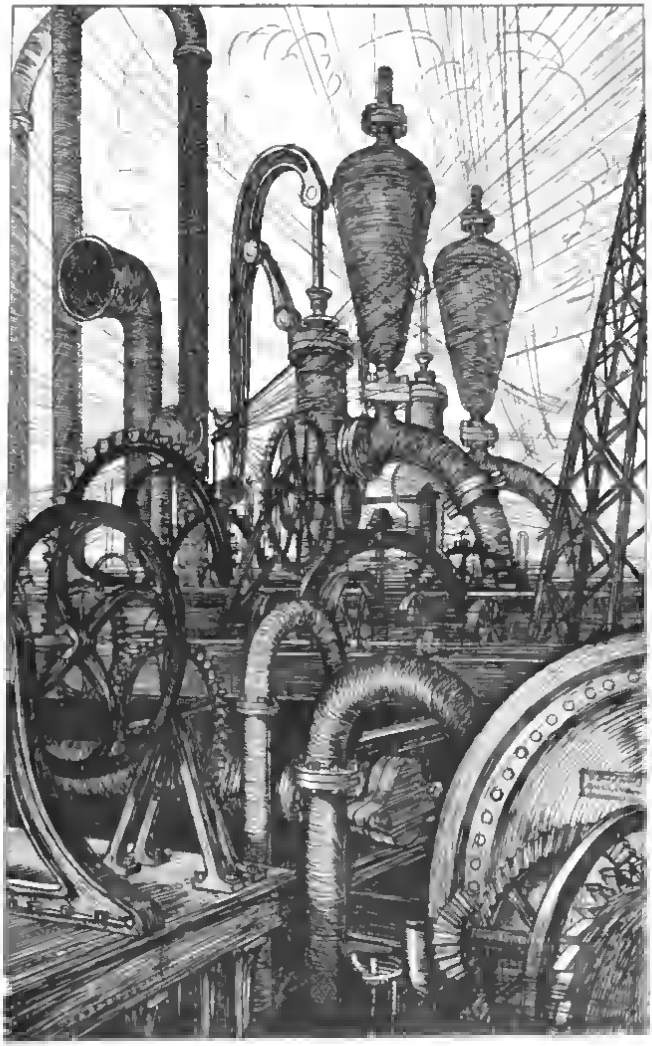
Their vigorous young hands had to grip at this, and then Elizabeth had a still more poignant thought that brought the tears from her wholesome eyes and down her healthy cheeks. "*One* of us," she said, "*one* of us might be——"

She choked; she could not say the word that is so terrible to the young and happy.

Yet to marry and be very poor in the cities of that time was—for any one who had lived pleasantly—a very dreadful thing. In the old agricultural days that had drawn to an end in the eighteenth century there had been a pretty proverb of love in a cottage; and indeed in those days the poor of the countryside had dwelt in flower-covered, diamond-windowed cottages of thatch and plaster, with the sweet air and earth about them, amidst tangled hedges and the song of birds, and with the ever-changing sky overhead. But all this had changed (the change was already beginning in the nineteenth century), and a new sort of life was opening for the poor—in the lower quarters of the city.

In the nineteenth century the lower quarters were still beneath the sky; they were areas of land on clay or other unsuitable soil, liable to floods or exposed to the smoke of more fortunate districts, insufficiently supplied with water, and as insanitary as the great fear of infectious diseases felt by the wealthier classes permitted. In the twenty-first century, however, the growth of the city storey above storey, and the coalescence of buildings, had led to a different arrangement. The prosperous people lived in a vast series of sumptuous hotels in the upper storeys and halls of the city fabric, the industrial population dwelt beneath in the tremendous ground floor and basement, so to speak, of the place.

In the refinement of life and manners these lower classes differed little from



"It had something of the quality of a prison"

their ancestors, the East-enders of Queen Victoria's time; but they had developed a distinct dialect of their own. In these under-ways they lived and died, rarely ascending to the surface except when work took them there. Since for most of them this was the sort of life to which they had been born, they found no great misery in such circumstances; but for people like Denton and Elizabeth, such a plunge would have seemed more terrible than death.

"And yet what else is there?" asked Elizabeth.

Denton professed not to know. Apart from his own feeling of delicacy, he was not sure how Elizabeth would like the idea of borrowing on the strength of her expectations.

The passage from London to Paris even, said Elizabeth, was beyond their means; and in Paris, as in any other city in the world, life would be just as costly and impossible as in London.

Well might Denton cry aloud: "If only we had lived in those days, dearest! If only we had lived in the past!" For to their eyes even nineteenth-century Whitechapel was seen through a mist of romance.

"Is there *nothing*?" cried Elizabeth, suddenly weeping. "Must we really wait for those three long years? Fancy *three* years—six-and-thirty months!" The human capacity for patience had not grown with the ages.

Then suddenly Denton was moved to speak of something that had already flickered across his mind. He had hit upon it at last. It seemed to him so wild a suggestion that he made it only half seriously. But to put a thing into words has ever a way of making it seem more real and possible than it seemed before. And so it was with him.

"Suppose," he said, "we went into the country?"

She looked at him to see if he was serious in proposing such an adventure.

"The country?"

"Yes—beyond there. Beyond the hills."

"How could we live?" she said. "*Where* could we live?"

"It is not impossible," he said. "People used to live in the country."

"But then there were houses."

"There are the ruins of villages and towns now. On the clay lands they are gone, of course. But they are still left on the grazing land, because it does not pay the Food Company to remove them. I know that—for certain. Besides, one sees them from the flying machines, you know. Well, we might shelter in some one of these, and repair it with our hands. Do you know, the thing is not so wild as it seems. Some of the men who go out every day to look after the crops and herds might be paid to bring us food."

She stood in front of him. "How strange it would be if one really could . . ."

"Why not?"

"But no one dares."

"That is no reason."

"It would be—oh! it would be so romantic and strange. If only it were possible."

"Why not possible?"

"There are so many things. Think of all the things we have, things that we should miss."

"Should we miss them? After all, the life we lead is very unreal—very artificial." He began to expand his idea, and as he warmed to his exposition the fantastic quality of his first proposal faded away.

She thought. "But I have heard of prowlers—escaped criminals."

He nodded. He hesitated over his answer because he thought it sounded boyish. He blushed. "I could get some one I know to make me a sword."

She looked at him with enthusiasm growing in her eyes. She had heard of swords, had seen one in a museum; she thought of those ancient days when men wore them as a common thing. His suggestion seemed an impossible dream to her, and perhaps for that reason she was eager for more detail. And inventing for the most part as he went along, he told her how they might live in the country as the old-world people had done. With every detail her interest grew, for she was one of those girls for whom romance and adventure have a fascination.

His suggestion seemed, I say, an impossible dream to her on that day, but the next day they talked about it again, and it was strangely less impossible.

"At first we should take food," said Denton. "We could carry food for ten or twelve days." It was an age of compact artificial nourishment, and such a provision had none of the unwieldy suggestion it would have had in the nineteenth century.

"But—until our house," she asked—"until it was ready, where should we sleep?"

"It is summer."

"But . . . . What do you mean?"

"There was a time when there were no houses in the world; when all mankind slept always in the open air."

"But for us! The emptiness! No walls—no ceiling!"

"Dear," he said, "in London you have many beautiful ceilings. Artists paint them and stud them with lights. But I have seen a ceiling more beautiful than any in London."

"But where?"

"It is the ceiling under which we two would be alone . . ."

"You mean . . . . ?"

"Dear," he said, "it is something the world has forgotten. It is Heaven and all the host of stars."

Each time they talked the thing seemed more possible and more desirable to them. In a week or so it was quite possible. Another week, and it was the inevitable thing they had to do. A great enthusiasm for the country seized hold of them and possessed them. The sordid tumult of the town, they said, overwhelmed them. They marvelled that this simple way out of their troubles had never come upon them before.

One morning near Midsummer-day, there was a new minor official upon the flying stage, and Denton's place was to know him no more.

Our two young people had secretly married, and were going forth manfully out of the city in which they and their ancestors before them had lived all their days. She wore a new dress of white cut in an old-fashioned pattern, and he had a bundle of provisions strapped athwart his back, and in his hand he carried—rather shamefacedly it is true, and under his purple cloak—an implement of archaic form, a cross-hilted thing of tempered steel.

Imagine that going forth! In their days the sprawling suburbs of Victorian times, with their vile roads, petty houses, foolish little gardens of shrub and geranium, and all their futile, pretentious privacies, had disappeared: the towering buildings of the new age, the mechanical ways, the electric and water mains, all came to an end together, like a wall, like a cliff, near four hundred feet in height, abrupt and sheer. All about the city spread the carrot, swede, and turnip fields of the Food Company,

"The Downs surmounted by the row of gigantic wind-wheels.

vegetables that were the basis of a thousand varied foods, and weeds and hedgerow tangles had been utterly extirpated. The incessant expense of weeding that went on year after year in the petty, wasteful and barbaric farming of the ancient days, the Food Company had economised for ever more by a campaign of extermination. Here and there, however, neat rows of bramble standards, and apple trees with whitewashed stems, intersected the fields, and in places groups of gigantic teazles reared their favoured spikes. Here and there huge agricultural machines hunched under waterproof covers. The mingled waters of the Wey and Mole and Wandle ran in rectangular channels; and wherever a gentle elevation of the ground permitted, a fountain of deodorised sewage distributed its benefits athwart the land and made a rainbow of the sunlight.

By a great archway in that enormous city wall emerged the Eadhamite road to Portsmouth, swarming in the morning sunshine with an enormous traffic bearing the blue-clad servants of the Food Company to their toil. A rushing traffic, beside which they seemed two scarce-moving dots. Along the outer tracks hummed and rattled the tardy little old-fashioned motors of such as had duties within twenty miles or so of the city; the inner ways were filled with vaster mechanisms—swift monocycles bearing a score of men, lank multicycles, quadricycles sagging with heavy loads, empty gigantic produce-carts that would come back again filled before the sun was setting, all with throbbing engines and noiseless wheels and a perpetual wild melody of horns and gongs.

Along the very verge of the outermost way our young people went in silence, newly wed and oddly shy of one another's company. Many were the things shouted to them as they tramped along, for in 2100 a foot-passenger on an English

road was almost as strange a sight as a motor car would have been in 1800. But they went on with steadfast eyes into the country, paying no heed to such cries.

Before them in the south rose the Downs, blue at first, and as they came nearer changing to green, surmounted by the row of gigantic wind wheels that supplemented the wind wheels upon the roof spaces of the city, and broken and restless with the long morning shadows of those whirling vanes. By midday they had come so near that they could see here and there little patches of pallid dots—the sheep the Meat Department of the Food Company owned. In another hour they had passed the clay and the root crops and the single fence that hedged them in, and the prohibition against trespass no longer held: the levelled roadway plunged into a cutting with all its traffic, and they could leave it and walk over the greensward and up the open hillside.

Never had these children of the latter days been together in such a lonely place. They were both very hungry and footsore—for walking was a rare exercise—and presently they sat down on the weedless, close-cropped grass, and looked back for the first time at the city from which they had come, shining wide and splendid in the blue haze of the valley of the Thames. Elizabeth was a little afraid of the unenclosed sheep away up the slope—she had never been near big unrestrained animals before—but Denton reassured her. And overhead a white-winged bird circled in the blue.

They talked but little until they had eaten, and then their tongues were loosened. He spoke of the happiness that was now certainly theirs, of the folly of not breaking sooner out of that magnificent prison of latter-day life, of the old romantic days that had passed from the world for ever. And then he became boastful. He took up the sword that lay on the ground beside him, and she took it from his hand and ran a tremulous finger along the blade.

"And you could," she said, "*you*—could raise this and strike a man?"

"Why not? If there were need."

"But," she said, "it seems so horrible. It would slash . . . There would be"—her voice sank—"*blood*."

"In the old romances you have read often enough . . ."

"Oh, I know in those—yes. But that is different. One knows it is not blood, but just a sort of red ink. . . And *you*—killing!"

She looked at him doubtfully, and then handed him back the sword.

After they had rested and eaten, they rose up and went on their way towards the hills. They passed quite close to a huge flock of sheep, who stared and bleated at their unaccustomed figures. She had never seen sheep before, and she shivered to think such gentle things must needs be slain for food. A sheep-dog barked at them from a distance, and then a shepherd appeared amidst the supports of the wind-wheels, and came down towards them.

When he drew near he called out to them, asking them whither they were going.

Denton hesitated, and told him briefly that they sought some ruined house among the Downs, in which they might live together. He tried to speak in an off-hand manner, as though it was a usual thing to do. The man stared incredulously.

"Have you *done* anything?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Denton. "Only we don't want to live in a city any longer. Why should we live in cities?"

The shepherd stared more incredulously than ever. "You can't live here," he said.

"We mean to try."

The shepherd stared from one to the other. "You'll go back to-morrow," he

said "It looks pleasant enough in the sunlight. . . Are you sure you've done nothing? We shepherds are not such *great* friends of the police"

Denton looked at him steadfastly. "No," he said. "But we are too poor to live in the city, and we can't bear the thought of wearing clothes of blue canvas and doing drudgery. We are going to live a simple life here, like the people of old."

The shepherd was a bearded man with a thoughtful face. He glanced at Elizabeth's fragile beauty.

"*They* had simple minds," he said.

"So have we," said Denton.

The shepherd smiled.

"If you go along here," he said, "along the crest beneath the wind-wheels, you will see a heap of mounds and ruins on your right-hand side. That was once a town called Epsom. There are no houses there, and the bricks have been used for a sheep pen Go on, and another heap on the edge of the root-land is Leatherhead; and then the hill turns away along the border of a valley, and there are woods of beech. Keep along the crest. You will come to quite wild places. In some parts, in spite of all the weeding that is done, ferns and bluebells and other such useless plants are growing still And through it all underneath the wind-wheels runs a straight lane paved with stones, a roadway of the Romans two thousand years old. Go to the right of that, down into the valley, and follow it along by the banks of the river You come presently to a street of houses, many with the roofs still sound upon them. There you may find shelter."

They thanked him

"But it's a quiet place. There is no light after dark there, and I have heard tell of robbers. It is lonely. Nothing happens there. The phonographs of the story tellers, the kinematograph entertainments, the news machines—none of them are to be found there. If you are hungry there is no food, if you are ill no doctor. . " He stopped.

"We shall try it," said Denton, moving to go on. Then a thought struck him, and he made an agreement with the shepherd, and learnt where they might find him, to buy and bring them anything of which they stood in need, out of the city

And in the evening they came to the deserted village, with its houses that seemed so small and odd to them: they found it golden in the glory of the sunset, and desolate and still. They went from one deserted house to another, marvelling at their quaint simplicity, and debating which they should choose And at last, in a sunlit corner of a room that had lost its outer wall, they came upon a wild flower, a little flower of blue that the weeders of the Food Company had overlooked

That house they decided upon; but they did not remain in it long that night, because they were resolved to feast upon nature And moreover the houses became very gaunt and shadowy after the sunlight had faded out of the sky. So after they had rested a little time they went to the crest of the hill again to see with their own eyes the silence of heaven set with stars, about which the old poets had had so many things to tell. It was a wonderful sight, and Denton talked like the stars, and when they went down the hill at last the sky was pale with dawn They slept but little, and in the morning when they woke a thrush was singing in a tree.

So these young people of the twenty-first century began their exile That morning they were very busy exploring the resources of this new home in which they were going to live the simple life They did not explore very fast or very far, because they went everywhere hand-in-hand; but they found the beginnings of

some furniture Beyond the village was a store of winter fodder for the sheep of the Food Company, and Denton dragged great armfuls to the house to make a bed; and in several of the houses were old fungus-eaten chairs and tables—rough, barbaric, clumsy furniture, it seemed to them, and made of wood. They repeated many of the things they had said on the previous day, and towards evening they found another flower, a harebell. In the late afternoon some Company shepherds went down the river valley riding on a big multicycle; but they hid from them, because their presence, Elizabeth said, seemed to spoil the romance of this old-world place altogether.

In this fashion they lived a week. For all that week the days were cloudless, and the nights nights of starry glory, that were invaded each night a little more by a crescent moon.

Yet something of the first splendour of their coming faded—faded imperceptibly day after day; Denton's eloquence became fitful, and lacked fresh topics of inspiration; the fatigue of their long march from London told in a certain stiffness of the limbs, and each suffered from a slight unaccountable cold. Moreover, Denton became aware of unoccupied time. In one place among the carelessly heaped lumber of the old times he found a rust-eaten spade, and with this he made a fitful attack on the razed and grass-grown garden—though he had nothing to plant or sow. He returned to Elizabeth with a sweat-streaming face, after half an hour of such work.

"There were giants in those days," he said, not understanding what wont and training will do. And their walk that day led them along the hills until they could see the city shimmering far away in the valley. "I wonder how things are going on there," he said.

And then came a change in the weather "Come out and see the clouds," she cried, and behold! they were a sombre purple in the north and east, streaming up to ragged edges at the zenith; and as they went up the hill these hurrying streamers blotted out the sunset. Suddenly the wind set the beech trees swaying and whispering, and Elizabeth shivered. And then far away the lightning flashed, flashed like a sword that is drawn suddenly, and the distant thunder marched about the sky, and even as they stood astonished, pattering upon them came the first headlong raindrops of the storm. In an instant the last streak of sunset was hidden by a falling curtain of hail, and the lightning flashed again, and the voice of the thunder roared louder, and all about them the world scowled dark and strange.

Seizing hands, these children of the city ran down the hill to their home, in infinite astonishment. And ere they reached it, Elizabeth was weeping with dismay, and the darkling ground about them was white and brittle and active with the pelting hail.

Then began a strange and terrible night for them. For the first time in their civilised lives they were in absolute darkness; they were wet and cold and shivering, all about them hissed the hail, and through the long neglected ceilings of the derelict home came noisy spouts of water and formed pools and rivulets on the creaking floors As the gusts of the storm struck the worn-out building, it groaned and shook, and now a mass of plaster from the wall would slide and smash, and now some loosened tile would rattle down the roof and crash into the empty greenhouse below. Elizabeth shuddered, and was still; Denton wrapped his gay and flimsy city cloak about her, and so they crouched in the darkness And ever the thunder broke louder and nearer, and ever more lurid flashed the lightning, jerking into a momentary gaunt clearness the steaming, dripping room in which they sheltered.

Never before had they been in the open air save when the sun was shining. All their time had been spent in the warm and airy ways and halls and rooms of the latter-day city. It was to them that night as if they were in some other world, some disordered chaos of stress and tumult, and almost beyond hoping that they should ever see the city ways again.

The storm seemed to last interminably, until at last they dozed between the thunderclaps, and then very swiftly it fell and ceased. And as the last patter of the rain died away they heard an unfamiliar sound.

"What is that?" cried Elizabeth.

It came again. It was the barking of dogs. It drove down the desert lane and passed; and through the window, whitening the wall before them and throwing upon it the shadow of the window frame and of a tree in black silhouette, shone the light of the waxing moon.

Just as the pale dawn was drawing the things about them into sight, the fitful barking of dogs came near again, and stopped. They listened. After a pause they heard the quick pattering of feet seeking round the house, and short, half-smothered barks. Then again everything was still.

"Ssh!" whispered Elizabeth, and pointed to the door of their room.

Denton went half-way towards the door, and stood listening. He came back with a face of affected unconcern. "They must be the sheep-dogs of the Food Company," he said. "They will do us no harm."

He sat down again beside her. "What a night it has been!" he said, to hide how keenly he was listening.

"I don't like dogs," answered Elizabeth, after a long silence.

"Dogs never hurt any one," said Denton. "In the old days—in the nineteenth century—everybody had a dog."

"There was a romance I heard once. A dog killed a man."

"Not this sort of dog," said Denton confidently. "Some of those romances—are exaggerated."

Suddenly a half bark and a pattering up the staircase; the sound of panting. Denton sprang to his feet and drew the sword out of the damp straw upon which they had been lying. Then in the doorway appeared a gaunt sheep-dog, and halted there. Behind it stared another. For an instant man and dogs faced each other, hesitating.

Then Denton, being ignorant of dogs, made a sharp step forward. "Go away," he said, with a clumsy motion of his sword.

The dog started and growled. Denton stopped sharply. "Good dog!" he said. The growling jerked into a bark.

"Good dog!" said Denton. The second dog growled and barked. A third dog out of sight down the staircase took up the barking also. Outside other dogs gave tongue—a large number it seemed to Denton.

"This is annoying," said Denton, without taking his eye off the brutes before him. "Of course the shepherds won't come out of the city for hours yet. Naturally these dogs don't quite make us out."

"I can't hear," shouted Elizabeth. She stood up and came to him.

Denton tried again, but the barking still drowned his voice. The sound had a curious effect upon his blood. Odd disused emotions began to stir; his face changed as he shouted. He tried again; the barking seemed to mock him, and one dog danced a pace forward, bristling. Suddenly he turned, and uttering certain words in the dialect of the underways, words incomprehensible to Elizabeth, he made for the dogs. There was a sudden cessation of the barking, a growl and

Elizabeth covered her face, and sank to the ground in a paroxysm of weeping

a snapping. Elizabeth saw the snarling head of the foremost dog, its white teeth and retracted ears, and the flash of the thrust blade. The brute leapt into the air and was flung back.

Then Denton, with a shout, was driving the dogs before him. The sword flashed above his head with a sudden new freedom of gesture, and then he vanished down the staircase. She made six steps to follow him, and on the

landing there was blood. She stopped, and hearing the tumult of dogs and Denton's shouts pass out of the house, ran to the window.

Nine wolfish sheep-dogs were scattering, one writhed before the porch; and Denton, tasting that strange delight of combat that slumbers still in the blood of even the most civilised man, was shouting and running across the garden space. And then she saw something that for a moment he did not see. The dogs circled round this way and that, and came again. They had him in the open.

In an instant she divined the situation. She would have called to him. For a moment she felt sick and helpless, and then, obeying a strange impulse, she gathered up her white skirt and ran downstairs. In the hall was the rusting spade. That was it! She seized it and ran out.

She came none too soon. One dog rolled before him, well-nigh slashed in half, but a second had him by the thigh, a third gripped his collar behind, and a fourth had the blade of the sword between its teeth, tasting its own blood. He parried the leap of a fifth with his left arm.

It might have been the first century instead of the twenty-first, so far as she was concerned. All the gentleness of her eighteen years of city life vanished before this primordial need. The spade smote hard and sure, and cleft a dog's skull. Another, crouching for a spring, yelped with dismay at this unexpected antagonist, and rushed aside. Two wasted precious moments on the binding of a feminine skirt.

The collar of Denton's cloak tore and parted as he staggered back; and that dog too felt the spade, and ceased to trouble him. He sheathed his sword in the brute at his thigh.

"To the wall!" cried Elizabeth; and in three seconds the fight was at an end, and our young people stood side by side, while a remnant of five dogs, with ears and tails of disaster, fled shamefully from the stricken field.

For a moment they stood panting and victorious, and then Elizabeth, dropping her spade, covered her face, and sank to the ground in a paroxysm of weeping. Denton looked about him, thrust the point of his sword into the ground so that it was at hand, and stooped to comfort her.

At last their more tumultuous emotions subsided, and they could talk again. She leant upon the wall, and he sat upon it so that he could keep an eye open for any returning dogs. Two, at any rate, were up on the hillside and keeping up a vexatious barking.

She was tear-stained, but not very wretched now, because for half an hour he had been repeating that she was brave and had saved his life. But a new fear was growing in her mind.

"They are the dogs of the Food Company," she said. "There will be trouble."

"I am afraid so. Very likely they will prosecute us for trespass."

A pause.

"In the old times," he said, "this sort of thing happened day after day."

"Last night!" she said. "I could not live through another such night."

He looked at her. Her face was pale for want of sleep, and drawn and haggard. He came to a sudden resolution. "We must go back," he said.

She looked at the dead dogs, and shivered. "We cannot stay here," she said.

"We must go back," he repeated, glancing over his shoulder to see if the enemy kept their distance. "We have been happy for a time. But the world is too civilised. Ours is the age of cities. More of this will kill us."

"But what are we to do? How can we live there?"

Denton hesitated. His heel kicked against the wall on which he sat. "It's a thing I haven't mentioned before," he said, and coughed; "but . . ."

"Yes?"

"You could raise money on your expectations," he said.

"Could I?" she said eagerly.

"Of course you could. What a child you are!"

She stood up, and her face was bright. "Why did you not tell me before?" she asked. "And all this time we have been here!"

He looked at her for a moment, and smiled. Then the smile vanished. "I thought it ought to come from you," he said. "I didn't like to ask for your money. And besides—at first I thought this would be rather fine."

There was a pause.

"It *has* been fine," he said; and glanced once more over his shoulder. "Until all this began."

"Yes," she said, "those first days. The first three days."

They looked for a space into one another's faces, and then Denton slid down from the wall and took her hand.

"To each generation," he said, "the life of its time. I see it all plainly now. In the city—that is the life to which we were born. To live in any other fashion . . . Coming here was a dream, and this—is the awakening."

"It was a pleasant dream," she said,—"in the beginning."

For a long space neither spoke.

"If we would reach the city before the shepherds come here, we must start," said Denton. "We must get our food out of the house and eat as we go."

Denton glanced about him again, and, giving the dead dogs a wide berth, they walked across the garden-space and into the house together. They found the wallet with their food, and descended the blood-stained stairs again. In the hall Elizabeth stopped. "One minute," she said. "There is something here."

She led the way into the room in which that one little blue flower was blooming. She stooped to it, she touched it with her hand.

"I want it," she said, and then, "I cannot take it."

Impulsively she stooped and kissed its petals.

Then silently, side by side, they went across the empty garden-space into the old high road, and set their faces resolutely towards the distant city—towards the complex mechanical city of those latter days, the city that had swallowed up mankind.

H. G. Wells.

THE WAYS OF THE CITY.

A STORY OF THE DAYS TO COME.

(Anno Domini 2000—2005.)

PROMINENT if not paramount among world-changing inventions in the history of man is that series of contrivances in locomotion that began with the railway and ended for a century or more with the motor and the patent road. That these contrivances, together with the device of limited liability joint stock companies and the supersession of agricultural labourers by skilled men with ingenious machinery, would necessarily concentrate mankind in cities of unparalleled magnitude and work an entire revolution in human life, became, after the event, a thing so obvious that it is a matter of astonishment it was not more clearly anticipated. Yet that any steps should be taken to anticipate the miseries such a revolution might entail does not appear even to have been suggested; and the idea that the moral prohibitions and sanctions, the privileges and concessions, the conception of property and responsibility, of comfort and beauty, that had rendered the mainly agricultural states of the past prosperous and happy, would fail in the rising torrent of novel opportunities and novel stimulations, never seems to have entered the nineteenth-century mind. That a citizen, kindly and fair in his ordinary life, could as a shareholder become almost murderously greedy; that commercial methods that were reasonable and honourable on the old-fashioned countryside, should on an enlarged scale be deadly and overwhelming; that ancient charity was modern pauperisation, and ancient employment modern sweating; that, in fact, a revision and enlargement of the duties and rights of man had become urgently necessary, were things it could not entertain, nourished as it was on an archaic system of education and profoundly retrospective and legal in all its habits of thought. It was known that the accumulation of men in cities involved unprecedented dangers of pestilence; there was an energetic development of sanitation; but that the diseases of gambling and usury, of luxury and tyranny should become endemic, and produce horrible consequences, was beyond the scope of nineteenth-century thought. And so, as if it were some inorganic process, practically unhindered by the creative will of man, the growth of the swarming unhappy cities that mark the twenty-first century accomplished itself.

The new society was divided into three main classes. At the summit slumbered the property owner, enormously rich by accident rather than design, potent save for the will and aim, the last *avatar* of Hamlet in the world. Below

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was the enormous multitude of workers employed by the gigantic companies that monopolised control; and between these two the dwindling middle class, officials of innumerable sorts, foremen, managers, the medical, legal, artistic, and scholastic classes, and the minor rich, a middle class whose members led a life of insecure luxury and precarious speculation amidst the movements of the great managers.

Already the love story and the marrying of two persons of this middle class have been told how they overcame the obstacles between them, and how they tried the simple old-fashioned way of living on the countryside and came back speedily enough into the city of London. Denton had no means—he had been a mere subordinate official in the flying stages before the elopement—so Elizabeth borrowed money on the securities that her father Mwres held in trust for her until she was one-and-twenty.

The rate of interest she paid was of course high, because of the uncertainty of her security, and the arithmetic of lovers is often sketchy and optimistic. Yet they had very glorious times after that return. They determined they would not go to a Pleasure city nor waste their days rushing through the air from one part of the world to the other, for in spite of one disillusionment their tastes were still old-fashioned. They furnished their little room with quaint old Victorian furniture, and found a shop on the forty-second floor in Seventh Way where printed books of the old sort were still to be bought. It was their pet affectation to read print instead of hearing phonographs. And when presently there came a sweet little girl, to unite them further if it were possible, Elizabeth would not send it to a *crèche*, as the custom was, but insisted on nursing it at home. The rent of their apartments was raised on account of this singular proceeding, but that they did not mind. It only meant borrowing a little more.

Presently Elizabeth was of age, and Denton had a business interview with her father that was not agreeable. An exceedingly disagreeable interview with their money-lender followed, from which he brought home a white face. On his return Elizabeth had to tell him of a new and marvellous intonation of "Goo" that their daughter had devised, but Denton was inattentive. In the midst, just as she was at the cream of her description, he interrupted. "How much money do you think we have left, now that everything is settled?"

She stared and stopped her appreciative swaying of the Goo genius that had accompanied her description.

"You don't mean . . ?"

"Yes," he answered. "Ever so much. We have been wild. It's the interest. Or something. And the shares you had, slumped. Your father did not mind. Said it was not his business, after what had happened. He's going to marry again. . . . Well—we have scarcely a thousand left!"

"Only a thousand?"

"Only a thousand."

And Elizabeth sat down. For a moment she regarded him with a white face, then her eyes went about the quaint, old fashioned room, with its middle Victorian furniture and genuine oleographs, and rested at last on the little lump of humanity within her arms.

Denton glanced at her and stood downcast. Then he swung round on his heel and walked up and down very rapidly.

"I must get something to do," he broke out presently. "I am an idle scoundrel. I ought to have thought of this before. I have been a selfish fool. I wanted to be with you all day . . ."

He stopped, looking at her white face. Suddenly he came and kissed her and the little face that nestled against her breast.

"It's all right, dear," he said, standing over her; "you won't be lonely now—now Dings is beginning to talk to you. And I can soon get something to do, you know. Soon . . . Easily . . . It's only a shock at first. But it will come all right. It's sure to come right. I will go out again as soon as I have rested, and find what can be done. For the present it's hard to think of anything."

"It would be hard to leave these rooms," said Elizabeth; "but——"

"There won't be any need of that—trust me."

"They are expensive."

Denton waved that aside. He began talking of the work he could do. He was not very explicit what it would be, but he was quite sure that there was something to keep them comfortably in the happy middle class, whose way of life was the only one they knew.

"There are three-and-thirty million people in London," he said: "some of them *must* have need of me."

"Some *must*."

"The trouble is . . . Well—Bindon, that brown little old man your father wanted you to marry. He's an important person. . . . I can't go back to my flying-stage work, because he is now a Commissioner of the Flying-Stage Clerks."

"I didn't know that," said Elizabeth.

"He was made that in the last few weeks . . . or things would be easy enough, for they liked me on the flying stage. But there's dozens of other things to be done—dozens. Don't you worry, dear. I'll rest a little while, and then we'll dine, and then I'll start on my rounds. I know lots of people—lots."

So they rested, and then they went to the public dining-room and dined, and then he started on his search for employment. But they soon realised that in the matter of one convenience the world was just as badly off as it had ever been, and that was a nice, secure, honourable, remunerative employment, leaving ample leisure for the private life, and demanding no special ability, no violent exertion nor risk, and no sacrifice of any sort for its attainment. He evolved a number of brilliant projects, and spent many days hurrying from one part of the enormous city to another in search of influential friends; and all his influential friends were glad to see him, and very sanguine until it came to definite proposals, and then they became guarded and vague. He would part with them coldly, and think over their behaviour, and get irritated on his way back, and stop at some telephone office and spend money on an animated but unprofitable quarrel. And as the days passed, he got so worried and irritated that even to seem kind and careless before Elizabeth cost him an effort—as she, being a loving woman, perceived very clearly.

After an extremely complex preface one day, she helped him out with a painful suggestion. He had expected her to weep and give way to despair when it came to selling all their joyfully bought early Victorian treasures, their quaint objects of art, their antimacassars, bead mats, repp curtains, veneered furniture, gold-framed steel engravings and pencil drawings, wax flowers under shades, stuffed birds, and all sorts of choice old things; but it was she who made the proposal. The sacrifice seemed to fill her with pleasure, and so did the idea of shifting to apartments ten or twelve floors lower in another hotel. "So long as Dings is with us, nothing matters," she said. "It's all experience." So he kissed her, said she was braver than when she fought the sheep-dogs, called her Boadicea, and abstained very carefully from reminding her that they would have to pay a considerably higher

rent on account of the little voice with which Dings greeted the perpetual uproar of the city.

His idea had been to get Elizabeth out of the way when it came to selling the absurd furniture about which their affections were twined and tangled; but when it came to the sale it was Elizabeth who haggled with the dealer while Denton went about the running ways of the city, white and sick with sorrow and the fear of what was still to come. When they moved into their sparsely furnished pink-and-white apartments in a cheap hotel, there came an outbreak of furious energy on his part, and then nearly a week of lethargy during which he sulked at home. Through those days Elizabeth shone like a star, and at the end Denton's misery found a vent in tears. And then he went out into the city ways again, and—to his utter amazement—found some work to do.

His standard of employment had fallen steadily until at last it had reached the lowest level of independent workers. At first he had aspired to some high official position in the great Flying or Windvane or Water Companies, or to an appointment on one of the General Intelligence Organisations that had replaced newspapers, or to some professional partnership; but those were the dreams of the beginning. From that he had passed to speculation, and three hundred gold 'lions' out of Elizabeth's thousand had vanished one evening in the share market. Now he was glad his good looks secured him a trial in the position of salesman to the Susannah Hat Syndicate, a Syndicate dealing in ladies' caps, hair decorations, and hats—for though the city was completely covered in, ladies still wore extremely elaborate and beautiful hats at the theatres and places of public worship.

It would have been amusing if one could have confronted a Regent Street shopkeeper of the nineteenth century with the development of his establishment in which Denton's duties lay. Nineteenth Way was still sometimes called Regent Street, but it was now a street of moving platforms and nearly eight hundred feet wide. The middle space was immovable and gave access by staircases descending into subterrancan ways to the houses on either side. Right and left were an ascending series of continuous platforms, each of which travelled about five miles an hour faster than the one internal to it, so that one could step from platform to platform until one reached the swiftest outer way and so go about the city. The establishment of the Susannah Hat Syndicate projected a vast *façade* upon the outer way, sending out overhead at either end an overlapping series of huge white glass screens, on which gigantic animated pictures of the faces of well-known beautiful living women wearing novelties in hats were thrown. A dense crowd was always collected in the stationary central way watching a vast kinematograph which displayed the changing fashion. The whole front of the building was in perpetual chromatic change, and all down the *façade*—four hundred feet it measured—and all across the street of moving ways, laced and winked and glittered in a thousand varieties of colour and lettering the inscription—

SUZANNA! 'ETS! SUZANNA! 'ETS!

A broadside of gigantic phonographs drowned all conversation in the moving way and roared "*hats*" at the passers-by, while far down the street and up, other batteries counselled the public to "walk down for Suzannah," and queried, "Why *don't* you buy the girl a hat?"

For the benefit of those who chanced to be deaf—and deafness was not uncommon in the London of that age—inscriptions of all sizes were thrown from the roof above upon the moving platforms themselves, and on one's hand, or on the bald head of the man before one, or on a lady's shoulders, or in a sudden jet

of flame before one's feet, the moving finger wrote in unanticipated letters of fire "*'ets r chip t'de*," or simply "*'ets*" And spite of all these efforts, so high was the pitch at which the city lived, so trained became one's eyes and ears to ignore all sorts of advertisement, that many a citizen had passed that place thousands of times and was still unaware of the existence of the Suzannah Hat Syndicate.

To enter the building one descended the staircase in the middle way and walked through a public passage in which pretty girls promenaded, girls who were willing to wear a ticketed hat for a small fee. The entrance chamber was a large hall in which wax heads fashionably adorned rotated gracefully upon pedestals, and from this one passed through a cash office to an interminable series of little rooms, each room with its salesman, its three or four hats and pins, its mirrors, its kinematographs, telephones and hat slides in communication with the central depôt, its comfortable lounge and tempting refreshments. A salesman in such an apartment did Denton now become. It was his business to attend to any of the incessant stream of ladies who chose to stop with him, to behave as winningly as possible, to offer refreshment, to converse on any topic the possible customer chose, and to guide the conversation dexterously but not insistently towards hats He was to suggest trying on various types of hat, and to show by his manner and bearing, but without any coarse flattery, the enhanced impression made by the hats he wished to sell. He had several mirrors, adapted by various subtleties of curvature and tint to different types of face and complexion, and much depended on the proper use of these

Denton flung himself at these curious and not very congenial duties with a good will and energy that would have amazed him a year before, but all to no purpose. The Senior Manageress, who had selected him for the appointment and conferred various small marks of favour upon him, suddenly changed in her manner, declared for no assignable cause that he was stupid, and dismissed him at the end of six weeks of salesmanship. So Denton had to resume his ineffectual search for employment.

This second search did not last very long Their money was at the ebb. To eke it out a little longer they resolved to part with their darling Dings, and took that small person to one of the public *crèches* that abounded in the city. That was the common use of the time. The industrial emancipation of women, the correlated disorganisation of the secluded "home," had rendered *crèches* a necessity for all but very rich and exceptionally-minded people. There children encountered hygienic and educational advantages impossible without such organisation. *Crèches* were of all classes and types of luxury, down to those of the Labour Company, where children were taken on credit, to be redeemed in labour as they grew up

But both Denton and Elizabeth being, as I have explained, strange old-fashioned young people, full of nineteenth-century ideas, hated these convenient *crèches* exceedingly, and at last took their little daughter to one with extreme reluctance. They were received by a motherly person in a uniform, who was very brisk and prompt in her manner until Elizabeth wept at the mention of parting from her child. The motherly person, after a brief astonishment at this unusual emotion, changed suddenly into a creature of hope and comfort, and so won Elizabeth's gratitude for life. They were conducted into a vast room presided over by several nurses and with hundreds of two year-old girls grouped about the toy-covered floor. This was the Two year-old Room. Two nurses came forward, and Elizabeth watched their bearing towards Dings with jealous eyes. They were kind—it was clear they felt kind, and yet . . .

Presently it was time to go. By that time Dings was happily established in

a corner, sitting on the floor with her arms filled, and herself, indeed, for the most part hidden by an unaccustomed wealth of toys She seemed careless of all human relationships as her parents receded.

They were forbidden to upset her by saying good-bye.

At the door Elizabeth glanced back for the last time, and behold! Dings had dropped her new wealth and was standing with a dubious face. Suddenly Elizabeth gasped, and the motherly nurse pushed her forward and closed the door.

"You can come again soon, dear," she said, with unexpected tenderness in her eyes. For a moment Elizabeth stared at her with a blank face. "You can come again soon," repeated the nurse. Then with a swift transition Elizabeth was weeping in the nurse's arms. So it was that Denton's heart was won also.

And three weeks after our young people were absolutely penniless, and only one way lay open. They must go to the Labour Company. So soon as the rent was a week overdue their few remaining possessions were seized, and with scant courtesy they were shown the way out of the hotel. Elizabeth walked along the passage towards the staircase that ascended to the motionless middle way, too dulled by misery to think. Denton stopped behind to finish a stinging and unsatisfactory argument with the hotel porter, and then came hurrying after her, flushed and hot. He slackened his pace as he overtook her, and together they ascended to the middle way in silence. There they found two seats vacant, and sat down.

"We need not go there—*yet*?" said Elizabeth.

"No—not till we are hungry," said Denton.

They said no more.

Elizabeth's eyes sought a resting-place and found none. To the right roared the eastward ways, to the left the ways in the opposite direction, swarming with people. Backwards and forwards along a cable overhead rushed a string of gesticulating men, dressed like clowns, each marked on back and chest with one gigantic letter, so that altogether they spelt out—

"PURKINJE'S DIGESTIVE PILLS."

An anæmic little woman in horrible coarse blue canvas pointed a little girl to one of this string of hurrying advertisements.

"Look!" said the anæmic woman: "there's yer father"

"Which?" said the little girl.

"'Im wiv his nose coloured red," said the anæmic woman.

The little girl began to cry, and Elizabeth could have cried too.

"Ain't 'e kickin' 'is legs!—*just!*" said the anæmic woman in blue, trying to make things bright again. "Looky—*now!*"

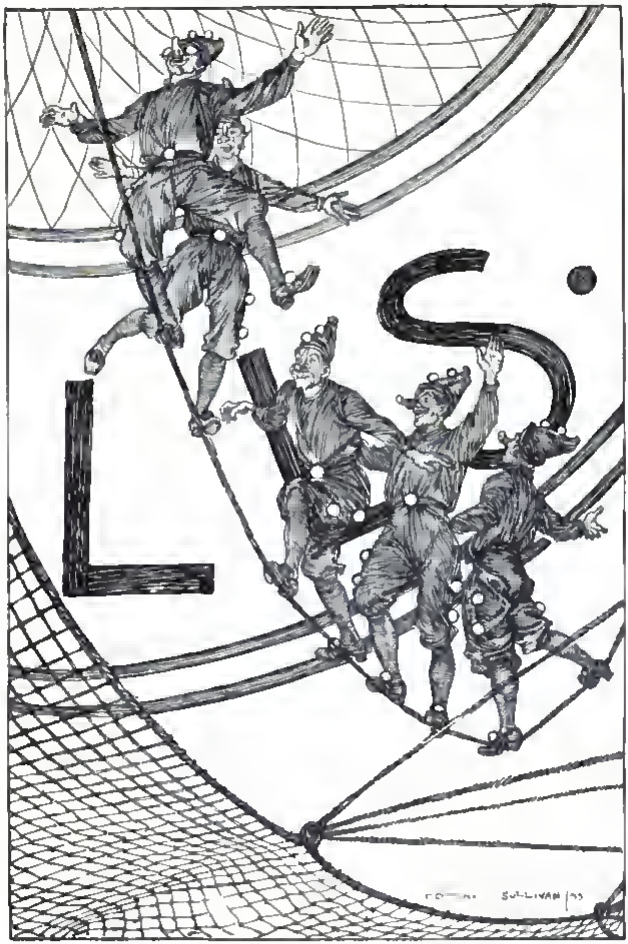
On the façade to the right a huge intensely bright disc of weird colour span incessantly, and letters of fire that came and went spelt out—

"DOES THIS MAKE YOU GIDDY?"

Then a pause, followed by—

"TAKE A PURKINJE'S DIGESTIVE PILL."

A vast and desolating braying began. "If you love Swagger Literature, put your telephone on to Bruggles, the Greatest Author of all Time. The Greatest Thinker of all Time. Teaches you Morals up to your Scalp! The very image of Socrates, except the back of his head, which is like Shakespear. He has six toes, dresses in red, and never cleans his teeth. Hear HIM!"



"Backwards and forwards along a cable overhead rushed a string of gesticulating men, dressed like clowns."

Denton's voice became audible in a gap in the uproar. "I never ought to have married you," he was saying. "I have wasted your money, ruined you, brought you to misery. I am a scoundrel . . . Oh, this accursed world!"

She tried to speak, and for some moments could not. She grasped his hand. "No," she said at last.

A half-formed desire suddenly became determination. She stood up. "Will you come?"

He rose also. "We need not go there yet."

"Not that. But I want you to come to the flying stages—where we met. You know? The little seat."

He hesitated. "*Can* you?" he said, doubtfully.

"Must," she answered.

He hesitated still for a moment, then moved to obey her will.

And so it was they spent their last half-day of freedom out under the open air in the little seat under the flying stages where they had been wont to meet five short years ago. There she told him, what she could not tell him in the tumultuous public ways, that she did not repent even now of their marriage—that whatever discomfort and misery life still had for them, she was content with the things that had been. The weather was kind to them, the seat was sunlit and warm, and overhead the shining aeroplanes went and came.

At last, towards sunsetting, their time was at an end, and they made their vows to one another and clasped hands, and then rose up and went back into the ways of the city, a shabby-looking, heavy-hearted pair, tired and hungry. Soon they came to one of the pale blue signs that marked a Labour Company Bureau. For a space they stood in the middle way regarding this, and at last descended, and entered the waiting-room.

The Labour Company had originally been a charitable organisation; its aim was to supply food, shelter, and work to all comers. This it was bound to do by the conditions of its incorporation, and it was also bound to supply food and shelter and medical attendance to all incapable of work who chose to demand its aid. In exchange these incapables paid labour notes, which they had to redeem upon recovery. They signed these labour notes with thumb-marks, which were photographed and indexed in such a way that this world-wide Labour Company could identify any one of its two or three hundred million clients at the cost of an hour's inquiry. The day's labour was defined as two spells in a treadmill used in generating electrical force, or its equivalent, and its due performance could be enforced by law. In practice the Labour Company found it advisable to add to its statutory obligations of food and shelter a few pence a day as an inducement to effort; and its enterprise had not only abolished pauperisation altogether, but supplied practically all but the very highest and most responsible labour throughout the world. Nearly a third of the population of the world were its serfs and debtors from the cradle to the grave.

In this practical, unsentimental way the problem of the unemployed had been most satisfactorily met and overcome. No one starved in the public ways, and no rags, no costume less sanitary and sufficient than the Labour Company's hygienic but indelegant blue canvas, pained the eye throughout the whole world. It was the constant theme of the phonographic newspapers how much the world had progressed since nineteenth-century days, when the bodies of those killed by the vehicular traffic or dead of starvation, were, they alleged, a common feature in all the busier streets.

Denton and Elizabeth sat apart in the waiting-room until their turn came. Most of the other people collected there seemed limp and taciturn, but three or four young people gaudily dressed made up for the quietude of their companions. They were life clients of the Company, born in the Company's *crèche* and

destined to die in its hospital, and they had been out for a spree with some shillings or so of extra pay. They talked vociferously in a later development of the Cockney dialect, manifestly very proud of themselves.

Elizabeth's eyes went from these to the less assertive figures. One seemed exceptionally pitiful to her. It was a woman of perhaps forty-five, with gold-stained hair and a painted face, down which abundant tears had trickled; she had a pinched nose, hungry eyes, lean hands and shoulders, and her dusty, worn-out finery told the story of her life. Another was a grey-bearded old man in the costume of a bishop of one of the high episcopal sects—for religion was now also a business, and had its ups and downs. And beside him a sickly, dissipated-looking boy of perhaps two-and-twenty glared at Fate.

A Labour Company's Bursary.

Presently Elizabeth and then Denton interviewed the manageress—for the Company preferred women in this capacity—and found she possessed an energetic face, a contemptuous manner, and a particularly unpleasant voice. They were given various checks, including one to certify that they need not have their heads cropped; and when they had given their thumb-marks, learnt the number corresponding thereunto, and exchanged their shabby middle-class clothes for duly numbered blue canvas suits, they repaired to the huge plain dining-room for their first meal under these new conditions. Afterwards they were to return to her for instructions about their work.

When they had made the exchange of their clothing Elizabeth did not seem able to look at Denton at first; but he looked at her, and saw with astonishment that even in blue canvas she was still beautiful. And then their soup and bread came sliding on its little rail down the long table towards them, and stopped with

a jerk, and he forgot the matter. For they had had no proper meal for three days.

After they had dined they rested for a time. Neither talked—there was nothing to say; and presently they got up and went back to the manageress to learn what they had to do.

The manageress referred to a tablet. "Y'r rooms won't be here; it'll be in the Highbury Ward, Ninety-seventh way, number two thousand and seventeen. Better make a note of it on y'r card. *You*, nought nought nought, type seven, sixty-four, b.c.d., *gamma* forty-one, female: you 'ave to go to the Metal-beating Company and try that for a day—fourpence bonus if ye're satisfactory; and *you*, nought seven one, type four, seven hundred and nine, g.f.b., *pi* five and ninety, male: you 'ave to go to the Photographic Company on Eighty-first way, and learn something or other—*I* don't know—thrippence. 'Ere's y'r cards. That's all. Next! *What?* Didn't catch it all? Lor! So suppose I must go over it all again. Why don't you listen? Keerless, unprovident people! One'd think these things didn't matter."

Their ways to their work lay together for a time. And now they found they could talk. Curiously enough, the worst of their depression seemed over now that they had actually donned the blue. Denton could talk with interest even of the work that lay before them. "Whatever it is," he said, "it can't be so hateful as that hat shop. And after we have paid for Dings, we shall still have a whole penny a day between us even now. Afterwards—we may improve,—get more money."

Elizabeth was less inclined to speech. "I wonder why work should seem so hateful," she said.

"It's odd," said Denton. "I suppose it wouldn't be if it were not the thought of being ordered about. . . I hope we shall have decent managers."

Elizabeth did not answer. She was not thinking of that. She was tracing out some thoughts of her own.

"Of course," she said presently, "we have been using up work all our lives. It's only fair——"

She stopped. It was too intricate.

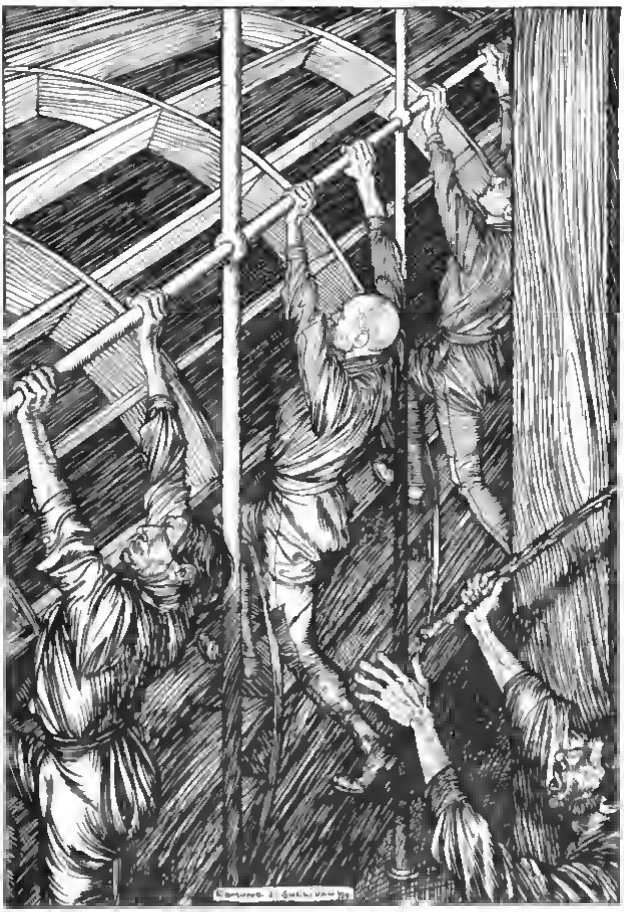
"We paid for it," said Denton, for at that time he had not troubled himself about these complicated things.

"We did nothing—and yet we paid for it. That's what I cannot understand."

Denton said nothing. "Perhaps we are paying," said Elizabeth presently—for her theology was old-fashioned and simple.

Presently it was time for them to part, and each went to the appointed work. Denton's was to mind a complicated hydraulic press that seemed almost an intelligent thing. This press worked by the sea water that was destined finally to flush the city drains—for the world had long since abandoned the folly of pouring drinkable water into its sewers. This water was brought close to the eastward edge of the city by a huge canal, and then raised by an enormous battery of pumps into reservoirs at a level of four hundred feet above the sea, from which it spread by a billion arterial branches over the city. Thence it poured down, cleansing, sluicing, working machinery of all sorts, through an infinite variety of capillary channels into the great drains, the *cloacæ maximæ*, and so carried the sewage out to the agricultural areas that surrounded London on every side.

The press was employed in one of the processes of the photographic manufacture, but the nature of the process it did not concern Denton to understand. The most salient fact to his mind was that it had to be conducted in ruby light, and as a consequence the room in which he worked was lit by one coloured globe that



"The day's labour"

poured a lurid and painful illumination about the room In the darkest corner stood the press whose servant Denton had now become it was a huge, dim, glittering thing, with a projecting hood that had a remote resemblance to a bowed head, and, squatting like some metal Bhudda in this weird light that ministered to its needs, it seemed to Denton in certain moods almost as if this must needs be

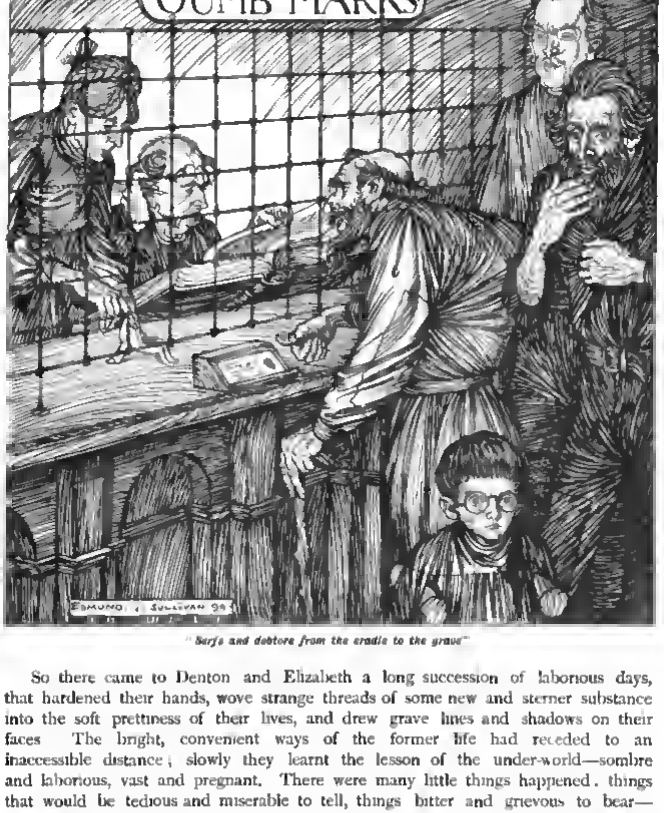
the obscure idol to which humanity in some strange aberration had offered up his life. His duties had a varied monotony. Such items as the following will convey an idea of the service of the press. The thing worked with a busy clicking so long as things went well; but if the paste that came pouring through a feeder from another room, and which it was perpetually compressing into thin plates, changed in quality, the rhythm of its click altered and Denton hastened to make certain adjustments. The slightest delay involved a waste of paste and the docking of one or more of his daily pence. If the supply of paste waned—there were hand processes of a peculiar sort involved in its preparation, and sometimes the workers had convulsions which deranged their output—Denton had to throw the press out of gear. In the painful vigilance a multitude of such trivial attentions entailed, painful because of the incessant effort its absence of natural interest required, Denton had now to pass one-third of his days. Save for an occasional visit from the manager, a kindly but singularly foul-mouthed man, Denton passed his working hours in solitude.

Elizabeth's work was of a more social sort. There was a fashion for covering the private apartments of the very wealthy with metal plates beautifully embossed with repeated patterns. The taste of the time demanded, however, that the repetition of the patterns should not be exact—not mechanical, but "natural"—and it was found that the most pleasing arrangement of pattern irregularity was obtained by employing women of refinement and natural taste to punch out the patterns with small dies. So many square feet of plates was exacted from Elizabeth as a minimum, and for whatever square feet she did in excess she received a small payment. The room, like most rooms of women workers, was under a manageress. men had been found by the Labour Company not only less exacting but extremely liable to excuse favoured ladies from a proper share of their duties. The manageress was a not unkindly, taciturn person, with the hardened remains of beauty of the brunette type; and the other women workers, who of course hated her, associated her name scandalously with one of the metal work directors in order to explain her position.

Only two or three of Elizabeth's fellow-workers were born labour serfs—plain, morose girls; but most of them corresponded to what the nineteenth century would have called a "reduced" gentlewoman. But the ideal of what constituted a gentlewoman had altered: the faint, faded, negative virtue, the modulated voice and restrained gesture of the old-fashioned gentlewoman had vanished from the earth. Most of her companions showed in discoloured hair, ruined complexions, and the texture of their reminiscent conversations, the vanished glories of a conquering youth. All of these artistic workers were much older than Elizabeth, and two openly expressed their surprise that any one so young and pleasant should come to share their toil. But Elizabeth did not trouble them with her old-world moral conceptions.

They were permitted, and even encouraged to converse with each other, for the directors very properly judged that anything that conduced to variations of mood made for pleasing fluctuations in their patterning, and Elizabeth was almost forced to hear the stories of these lives with which her own interwove: garbled and distorted they were by vanity, indeed, and yet comprehensible enough. And soon she began to appreciate the small spites and cliques, the little misunderstandings and alliances that enmeshed about her. One woman was excessively garrulous and descriptive about a wonderful son of hers; another had cultivated a foolish coarseness of speech, that she seemed to regard as the wittiest expression of originality conceivable; a third mused for ever on dress, and whispered to Elizabeth how she saved her pence day after day, and would presently have a glorious day

of freedom, wearing . . . and then followed lines of description, two others sat always together, and called one another pet names, until one day some little thing happened, and they sat apart, blind and deaf as it seemed to one another's being. And always from them all came an incessant tap, tap, tap, tap, and the manageress listened always to the rhythm to mark if one fell away. Tap, tap, tap, tap: so their days passed, so their lives must pass. Elizabeth sat among them, kindly and quiet, gray-hearted, marvelling at Fate: tap, tap, tap; tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap.



"Serfs and debtors from the cradle to the grave"

So there came to Denton and Elizabeth a long succession of laborious days, that hardened their hands, wove strange threads of some new and sterner substance into the soft prettiness of their lives, and drew grave lines and shadows on their faces. The bright, convenient ways of the former life had receded to an inaccessible distance; slowly they learnt the lesson of the under-world—sombre and laborious, vast and pregnant. There were many little things happened: things that would be tedious and miserable to tell, things bitter and grievous to bear—indignities, tyrannies, such as must ever season the bread of the poor in cities; and one thing that was not little, but seemed like the utter blackening of life

to them, which was that the child they had given life to sickened and died. But that story, that ancient, perpetually recurring story, has been told so often, has been told so beautifully, that there is no need to tell it over again here. There was the same sharp fear, the same long anxiety, the deferred inevitable blow, and the black silence. It has always been the same; it will always be the same. It is one of the things that must be.

And it was Elizabeth who was the first to speak, after an aching, dull interspace of days; not, indeed, of the foolish little name that was a name no longer, but of the darkness that brooded over her soul. They had come through the shrieking, tumultuous ways of the city together; the clamour of trade, of yelling competitive religions, of political appeal, had beat upon deaf ears; the glare of focussed lights, of dancing letters, and fiery advertisements, had fallen upon the set, miserable faces unheeded. They took their dinner in the dining-hall at a place apart. "I want," said Elizabeth clumsily, "to go out to the flying stages—to that seat. Here, one can say nothing."

Denton looked at her. "It will be night," he said.

"I have asked,—it is a fine night." She stopped.

He perceived she could find no words to explain herself. Suddenly he understood that she wished to see the stars once more, the stars they had watched together from the open downland in that wild honeymoon of theirs five years ago. Something caught at his throat. He looked away from her.

"There will be plenty of time to go," he said, in a matter-of-fact tone.

And at last they came out to the little seat on the flying stage, and sat there for a long time in silence. The little seat was in shadow, but the zenith was pale blue with the effulgence of the stage overhead, and all the city spread below them, squares and circles and patches of brilliance caught in a meshwork of light. The little stars seemed very faint and small: near as they had been to the old world watcher, they had become now infinitely remote. Yet one could see them in the darkened patches amidst the glare, and especially in the northward sky, the ancient constellations gliding steadfast and patient about the pole.

Long our two people sat in silence, and at last Elizabeth sighed.

"If I understand," she said, "if I could understand. When one is down there the city seems everything—the noise, the hurry, the voices—you must live, you must scramble. Here—it is nothing, a thing that passes. One can think in peace."

"Yes," said Denton. "How flimsy it all is! From here more than half of it is swallowed by the night. . . . It will pass."

"We shall pass first," said Elizabeth.

"I know," said Denton. "If life were not a moment, the whole of history would seem like the happening of a day. . . . Yes—we shall pass. And the city will pass, and all the things that are to come. Man and the Overman and wonders unspeakable. And yet . . ."

He paused, and then began afresh. "I know what you feel. At least I fancy. . . . Down there one thinks of one's work, one's little vexations and pleasures, one's eating and drinking and ease and pain. One lives, and one must die. Down there and every day—our sorrow seemed the end of life. . . .

"Up here it is different. For instance, down there it would seem impossible almost to go on living if one were horribly disfigured, horribly crippled, disgraced. Up here—under these stars—none of those things would matter. They don't matter. . . . They are a part of something. One seems just to touch that something—under the stars. . . ."

He stopped. The vague, impalpable things in his mind, cloudy emotions half

shaped towards ideas, vanished before the rough grasp of words. "It is hard to express," he said lamely

They sat through a long stillness.

"It is well to come here," he said at last. "We stop—our minds are very finite. After all we are just poor animals rising out of the brute, each with a mind, the poor beginning of a mind. We are so stupid. So much hurts. And yet . . .

"I know, I know—and some day we shall *see*.

"All this frightful stress, all this discord will resolve to harmony, and we shall know it. Nothing is, but it makes for that. Nothing All the failures—every little thing makes for that harmony Everything is necessary to it, we shall find. We shall find. Nothing, not even the most dreadful thing, could be left out Not even the most trivial. Every tap of your hammer on the brass, every moment of work, my idleness even . . . Dear one! every movement of our poor little one . . . All these things go on for ever. And the faint impalpable things We, sitting here together.—Everything . . .

"The passion that joined us, and what has come since. It is not passion now. More than anything else it is sorrow. *Dear* . . ."

He could say no more, could follow his thoughts no further.

Elizabeth made no answer—she was very still, but presently her hand sought his and found it.

H. G. WELLS.

"ASPERGES."

A MISTY veil hangs o'er the distant wold,
In trailing cloud-skirts of fast falling rain;
While through the haze that fills the steaming plain,
The turquoise west shines, barred with blazing gold.
O'er the deep purple of the eastern skies,
Where night's weird empire rises dark and dun,
The flaming fingers of the setting sun
Fling a great arch of painted harmonies.

WILFRED DRAYCOTT.

UNDERNEATH.

A STORY OF THE DAYS TO COME.

(Anno Domini 2098.)

UNDER the stars one may reach upward and touch resignation, whatever the evil thing may be, but in the heat and stress of the day's work we lapse again, come disgust and anger and intolerable moods. How little is all our magnanimity—an accident! a phase! The very Saints of old had first to flee the world. And Denton and his Elizabeth could not flee their world, no longer were there open roads to unclaimed lands where men might live freely—however hardly—and keep their souls in peace. The city had swallowed up mankind.

For a time these two Labour Serfs were kept at their original occupations, she at her brass stamping and Denton at his press, and then came a move for him that brought with it fresh and still bitterer experiences of life in the underways of the great city. He was transferred to the care of a rather more elaborate press in the central factory of the London Tile Trust.

In this new situation he had to work in a long vaulted room with a number of other men, for the most part born Labour Serfs. He came to this intercourse reluctantly. His upbringing had been refined, and, until his ill fortune had brought him to that costume, he had never spoken in his life, except by way of command or some immediate necessity, to the white-faced wearers of the blue canvas. Now at last came contact, he had to work beside them, share their tools, eat with them. To both Elizabeth and himself this seemed a further degradation.

His distaste would have seemed extreme to a man of the nineteenth century. But slowly and inevitably in the intervening years a gulf had opened between the wearers of the blue canvas and the classes above, a difference not simply of circumstances and habits of life, but of habits of thought—even of language. The underways had developed a dialect of their own; above, too, had arisen a dialect, a code of thought, a language of "culture," which aimed by a sedulous search after fresh distinction to widen perpetually the space between itself and "vulgarity." The bond of a common faith, moreover, no longer held the race together. The last years of the nineteenth century were distinguished by the rapid development

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among the prospemus idle of esoteric perversions of the popular religion: glosses and interpretations that reduced the broad teachings of the carpenter of Nazareth to the exquisite narrowness of their lives. And, spite of their inclination towards the ancient fashion of living, neither Elizabeth nor Denton had been sufficiently original to escape the suggestion of their surroundings In matters of common behaviour they had followed the ways of their class, and so when they fell at last to be Labour Serfs it seemed to them almost as though they were falling among offensive inferior animals; they felt as a nineteenth-century duke and duchess might have felt who were forced to take rooms in the Jago.

Their natural impulse was to maintain a "distance" But Denton's first idea of a dignified isolation from his new surroundings was soon rudely dispelled. He had imagined that his fall to the position of a Labour Serf was the end of his lesson, that when their little daughter had died he had plumbed the deeps of life; but indeed these things were only the beginning Life demands something more from us than acquiescence. And now in a roomful of machine minders he was to learn a wider lesson, to make the acquaintance of another factor in life, a factor as elemental as the loss of things dear to us, more elemental even than toil

His quiet discouragement of conversation was an immediate cause of offence—was interpreted, rightly enough I fear, as disdain. His ignorance of the vulgar dialect, a thing upon which he had hitherto prided himself, suddenly took upon itself a new aspect. He failed to perceive at once that his reception of the coarse and stupid but genially intended remarks that greeted his appearance must have stung the makers of these advances like blows in their faces. "Don't understand," he said rather coldly, and at hazard, "No, thank you."

The man who had addressed him stared, scowled, and turned away.

A second, who also failed at Denton's unaccustomed ear, took the trouble to repeat his remark, and Denton discovered he was being offered the use of an oil can He expressed polite thanks, and this second man embarked upon a penetrating conversation. Denton, he remarked, had been a swell, and he wanted to know how he had come to wear the blue. He clearly expected an interesting record of vice and extmvagance. Had Denton ever been at a Pleasure City? Denton was speedily to discover how the existence of these wonderful places of delight permeated and defiled the thought and honour of these unwilling, hopeless workers of the underworld.

His aristocratic temperament resented these questions. He answered "No" curtly. The man persisted with a still more personal question, and this time it was Denton who turned away.

"Gorblimey!" said his interlocutor, much astonished.

It presently forced itself upon Denton's mind that this remarkable conversation was being repeated in indignant tones to more sympathetic hearers, and that it gave rise to astonishment and inmical laughter They looked at Denton with manifestly enhanced interest A curious perception of isolation dawned upon him He tried to think of his press and its unfamiliar peculiarities. . . .

The machines kept everybody pretty busy during the first spell, and then came a recess. It was only an interval for refreshment, too brief for any one to go out to a Labour Company dining-room. Denton followed his fellow workers into a short gallery, in which were a number of bins of refuse from the presses.

Each man produced a packet of food. Denton had no packet. The manager, a careless young man who held his position by influence, had omitted to warn Denton that it was necessary to apply for this provision. He stood apart, feeling hungry. The others drew together in a group and talked in undertones,

glancing at him ever and again. He became uneasy. His appearance of disregard cost him an increasing effort. He tried to think of the levers of his new press.

Presently one, a man shorter but much broader and stouter than Denton, came forward to him. Denton turned to him as unconcernedly as possible. "Here!" said the delegate—as Denton judged him to be—extending a cube of bread in a not too clean hand. He had a swart, broad-nosed face, and his mouth hung down towards one corner.

Denton felt doubtful for the instant whether this was meant for civility or insult. His impulse was to decline. "No, thanks," he said; and, at the man's change of expression, "I'm not hungry."

There came a laugh from the group behind. "Told you so," said the man who had offered Denton the loan of an oil can. "He's top side, he is. You ain't good enough for 'im."

The swart face grew a shade darker.

"Here," said its owner, still extending the bread, and speaking in a lower tone, "you got to eat this. See?"

Denton looked into the threatening face before him, and odd little currents of energy seemed to be running through his limbs and body.

"I don't want it," he said, trying a pleasant smile that twitched and failed.

The thickset man advanced his face, and the bread became a physical threat in his hand. Denton's mind rushed together to the one problem of his antagonist's eyes.

"Eat it," said the swart man.

There came a pause, and then they both moved quickly. The cube of bread described a complicated path, a curve that would have ended in Denton's face; and then his fist hit the wrist of the hand that gripped it, and it flew upward, and out of the conflict—its part played.

He stepped back quickly, fists clenched and arms tense. The hot, dark countenance receded, became an alert hostility, watching its chance. Denton for one instant felt confident, and strangely buoyant and serene. His heart beat quickly. He felt his body alive, and glowing to the tips.

"Scrap, boys!" shouted some one, and then the dark figure had leapt forward, ducked back and sideways, and come in again. Denton struck out, and was hit. One of his eyes seemed to him to be demolished, and he felt a soft lip under his fist just before he was hit again—this time under the chin. A huge fan of fiery needles shot open. He had a momentary persuasion that his head was knocked to pieces, and then something hit his head and back from behind, and the fight became an uninteresting, an impersonal thing.

He was aware that time—seconds or minutes—had passed, abstract, uneventful time. He was lying with his head in a heap of ashes, and something wet and warm ran swiftly into his neck. The first shock broke up into discrete sensations. All his head throbbed; his eye and his chin throbbed exceedingly, and the taste of blood was in his mouth.

"He's all right," said a voice. "He's opening his eyes."

"Serve him —— well right," said a second.

His mates were standing about him. He made an effort and sat up. He put his hand to the back of his head, and his hair was wet and full of cinders. A laugh greeted the gesture. His eye was partially closed. He perceived what had happened. His momentary anticipation of a final victory had vanished.

"Looks surprised," said some one.

"He had a momentary persuasion that his head was knocked to pieces."

"'Ave any more?" said a wit; and then, imitating Denton's refined accent, "No, thank you."

Denton perceived the swart man with a blood-stained handkerchief before his face, and somewhat in the background

"Where's that bit of bread he's got to eat?" said a little ferret-faced creature; and sought with his foot in the ashes of the adjacent bin

Denton had a moment of internal debate He knew the code of honour requires a man to pursue a fight he has begun to the bitter end; but this was his first taste of the bitterness. He was resolved to rise again, but he felt no

passionate impulse. It occurred to him—and the thought was no very violent spur—that he was perhaps after all a coward. For a moment his will was heavy, a lump of lead.

"'Ere it is," said the little ferret-faced man, and stooped to pick up a cindery cube. He looked at Denton, then at the others.

Slowly, unwillingly, Denton stood up.

A dirty-faced albino extended a hand to the ferret-faced man. "Gimme that toke," he said. He advanced threateningly, bread in hand, to Denton. "So you ain't 'ad your bellyful yet," he said. "Eh?"

Now it was coming. "No, I haven't," said Denton, with a catching of the breath, and resolved to try this brute behind the ear before he himself got stunned again. He knew he would be stunned again. He was astonished how ill he had judged himself beforehand. A few ridiculous lunges, and down he would go again. He watched the albino's eyes. The albino was grinning confidently, like a man who plans an agreeable trick. A sudden perception of impending indignities stung Denton.

"You leave 'im alone, Jim," said the swart man suddenly over the blood-stained rag. "He ain't done nothing to you."

The albino's grin vanished. He stopped. He looked from one to the other. It seemed to Denton that the swart man demanded the privilege of his destruction. The albino would have been better.

"You leave 'im alone," said the swart man. "See? 'E's 'ad 'is licks."

A clattering bell lifted up its voice and solved the situation. The albino hesitated. "Lucky for you," he said, adding a foul metaphor, and turned with the others towards the press-room again. "Wait for the end of the spell, mate," said the albino over his shoulder—an afterthought. The swart man waited for the albino to precede him. Denton realised that he had a reprieve.

The men passed towards an open door. Denton became aware of his duties, and hurried to join the tail of the queue. At the doorway of the vaulted gallery of presses a yellow-uniformed labour policeman stood ticking a card. He had ignored the swart man's haemorrhage.

"Hurry up there!" he said to Denton.

"Hullo!" he said, at the sight of his facial disarray. "Who's been hitting *you*?"

"That's my affair," said Denton.

"Not if it spiles your work, it ain't," said the man in yellow. "You mind that."

Denton made no answer. He was a rough—a labourer. He wore the blue canvas. The laws of assault and battery, he knew, were not for the likes of him. He went to his press.

He could feel the skin of his brow and chin and head lifting themselves to noble bruises, felt the throb and pain of each aspiring contusion. His nervous system slid down to lethargy, at each movement in his press adjustment he felt he lifted a weight. And as for his honour—that too throbbed and puffed. How did he stand? What precisely had happened in the last ten minutes? What would happen next? He knew that here was enormous matter for thought, and he could not think save in disordered snatches.

His mood was a sort of stagnant astonishment. All his conceptions were overthrown. He had regarded his security from physical violence as inherent, as one of the conditions of life. So, indeed, it had been while he wore his middle-class costume, had his middle-class property to serve for his defence. But who would interfere among Labour roughs fighting together? And indeed in those days

no man would In the Underworld there was no law between man and man, the law and machinery of the state had become for them something that held men down, fended them off from much desirable property and pleasure, and that was all. Violence, that ocean in which the brutes live for ever, and from which a thousand dykes and contrivances have won our hazardous civilised life, had flowed in again upon the sinking underways and submerged them. The fist ruled. Denton had come right down at last to the elemental—fist and trick and the stubborn heart and fellowship—even as it was in the beginning.

The rhythm of his machine changed, and his thoughts were interrupted.

Presently he could think again. Strange how quickly things had happened! He bore these men who had thrashed him no very vivid ill-will. He was bruised and enlightened. He saw with absolute fairness now the reasonableness of his unpopularity. He had behaved like a fool. Disdain, seclusion, are the privilege of the strong. The fallen aristocrat still clinging to his pointless distinction is surely the most pitiful creature of pretence in all this clamant universe. Good heavens! what was there for him to despise in these men?

What a pity he had not appreciated all this better five hours ago!

What would happen at the end of the spell? He could not tell. He could not imagine. He could not imagine the thoughts of these men. He was sensible only of their hostility and utter want of sympathy. Vague possibilities of shame and violence chased one another across his mind. Could he devise some weapon? He recalled his assault upon the hypnotist, but there were no detachable lamps here. He could see nothing that he could catch up in his defence.

For a space he thought of a headlong bolt for the security of the public ways directly the spell was over. Apart from the trivial consideration of his self-respect, he perceived that this would be only a foolish postponement and aggravation of his trouble. He perceived the ferret-faced man and the albino talking together with their eyes towards him. Presently they were talking to the swart man, who stood with his broad back studiously towards Denton.

At last came the end of the second spell. The lender of oil cans stopped his press sharply and turned round, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. His eyes had the quiet expectation of one who seats himself in a theatre.

Now was the crisis, and all the little nerves of Denton's being seemed leaping and dancing. He had decided to show fight if any fresh indignity was offered him. He stopped his press and turned. With an enormous affectation of ease he walked down the vault and entered the passage of the ash pits, only to discover he had left his jacket—which he had taken off because of the heat of the vault—beside his press. He walked back. He met the albino eye to eye.

He heard the ferret-faced man in expostulation. "'E reely ought' eat it,' said the ferret-faced man. "'E did reely."

"No—you leave 'im alone," said the swart man.

Apparently nothing further was to happen to him that day. He passed out to the passage and staircase that led up to the moving platforms of the city.

He emerged on the livid brilliance and streaming movement of the public street. He became acutely aware of his disfigured face, and felt his swelling bruises with a limp, investigatory hand. He went up to the swiftest platform, and seated himself on a Labour Company bench.

He lapsed into a pensive torpor. The immediate dangers and stresses of his position he saw with a sort of static clearness. What would they do to-morrow? He could not tell. What would Elizabeth think of his brutalisation? He could not tell. He was exhausted. He was aroused presently by a hand upon his arm.

He looked up, and saw the swart man seated beside him. He started. Surely he was safe from violence in the public way!

The swart man's face retained no traces of his share in the fight; his expression was free from hostility—seemed almost deferential. "'Scuse me," he said, with a total absence of truculence. Denton realised that no assault was intended. He stared, awaiting the next development.

It was evident the next sentence was premeditated. "Whad—I—was—going—to say—was this," said the swart man, and sought through a silence for further words.

"Whad—I—was—going—to say—was this," he repeated.

Finally he abandoned that gambit. "*You're* aw right," he cried, laying a grimy hand on Denton's grimy sleeve. "*You're* aw right. You're a ge'man Sorry—very sorry. Wanted to tell you that."

Denton realised that there must exist motives beyond a mere impulse to abominable proceedings in the man. He meditated, and swallowed an unworthy pride

"I did not mean to be offensive to you," he said, "in refusing that bit of bread"

"Meant it friendly," said the swart man, recalling the scene; "but—in front of that blarsted Whitey and his snigger—— Well—I *'ad* to scrap"

"Yes," said Denton with sudden fervour "I was a fool"

"Ah!" said the swart man, with great satisfaction. "*That's* aw right. Shake!"

And Denton shook.

The moving platform was rushing by the establishment of a face moulder, and its lower front was a huge display of mirror, designed to stimulate the thirst for more symmetrical features. Denton caught the reflection of himself and his new friend, enormously twisted and broadened. His own face was puffed, one-sided, and blood-stained; a grin of idiotic and insincere amiability distorted its latitude. A wisp of hair occluded one eye. The trick of the mirror presented the swart man as a gross expansion of lip and nostril. They were linked by shaking hands. Then abruptly this vision passed—to return to memory in the anæmic meditations of a waking dawn

As he shook, the swart man made some muddled remark, to the effect that he had always known he could get on with a gentleman if one came his way. He prolonged the shaking until Denton, under the influence of the mirror, withdrew his hand. The swart man became pensive, spat impressively on the platform, and resumed his theme.

"Whad I was going to say was this," he said; was gravelled, and shook his head at his foot.

Denton became curious "Go on," he said, attentive

The swart man took the plunge. He grasped Denton's arm, became intimate in his attitude. "'Scuse me," he said. "Fact is, you done know *'ow* to scrap. Done know *'ow* to. Why—you done know 'ow to *begin* You'll get killed if you don't mind. 'Oldin' your 'ands—— *There!*"

He reinforced his statement by objurgation, watching the effect of each oath with a wary eye.

"F'r instance. You're tall. Long arms. You get a longer reach than any one in the brasted vault. Gorblimey, but I thought I'd got a tough 'un. 'Stead of which. . . . 'Scuse me. I wouldn't have *'it* you if I'd known. It's like fighting sacks. 'Tisn' right. Y'r arms seemed 'ung on 'ooks. Reg'lar—'ung on 'ooks. There!"

Denton stared, and then surprised and hurt his battered chin by a sudden laugh. Bitter tears came into his eyes.

"Go on," he said.

The swart man reverted to his formula. He was good enough to say he liked the look of Denton, thought he had stood up "amazing plucky. On'y pluck ain't no good—ain't no brasted good—if you don't 'old your 'ands.

"Whad I was going to say was this," he said. "Lemme show you 'ow to scrap. Jest lemme. You're ig'nant, you ain't no class; but you might be a very decent scrapper—very decent. Shown. That's what I meant to say."

Denton hesitated. "But—" he said, "I can't give you anything——"

"That's the ge'man all over," said the swart man. "Who arst you to?"

"Denton caught the reflection of himself and his new friend, enormously twisted and broadened."

"But your time?"

"If you don't get learnt scrapping you'll get killed,—don't you make no bones of that."

Denton thought. "I don't know," he said.

He looked at the face beside him, and all its native coarseness shouted at him. He felt a quick revulsion from his transient friendliness. It seemed to him incredible that it should be necessary for him to be indebted to such a creature.

"The chaps are always scrapping," said the swart man. "Always. And, of course—if one gets wavy and 'its you vital . . ."

"By God!" cried Denton, "I wish one would."

"Of course, if you feel like that——"

"You don't understand."

"P'raps I don't," said the swart man; and lapsed into a fuming silence.

When he spoke again his voice was less friendly, and he prodded Denton by way of address. "Look see!" he said; "are you going to let me show you 'ow to scrap?"

"It's tremendously kind of you," said Denton; "but——"

There was a pause. The swart man rose and bent over Denton.

"Too much ge'man," he said—"eh? I got a red face . . . By gosh! you are—you *are* a brasted fool!"

He turned away, and instantly Denton realised the truth of this remark.

The swart man descended with dignity to a cross way, and Denton, after a momentary impulse to pursuit, remained on the platform. For a time the things that had happened filled his mind. In one day his graceful system of resignation had been shattered beyond hope. Brute force, the final, the fundamental, had thrust its face through all his explanations and glosses and consolations and grinned enigmatically. Though he was hungry and tired, he did not go on directly to the Labour Hotel, where he would meet Elizabeth. He found he was beginning to think, he wanted very greatly to think, and so, wrapped in a monstrous cloud of meditation, he went the circuit of the city on his moving platform twice. You figure him, tearing through the glaring, thunder-voiced city at a pace of fifty miles an hour, the city upon the planet that spins along its chartless path through space many thousands of miles an hour, funking most terribly, and trying to understand why the heart and will in him should suffer and keep alive.

When at last he came to Elizabeth, she was white and anxious. He might have noted she was in trouble, had it not been for his own preoccupation. He feared most that she would desire to know every detail of his indignities, that she would be sympathetic or indignant. He saw her eyebrows rise at the sight of him.

"I've had rough handling," he said, and gasped. "It's too fresh—too hot. I don't want to talk about it."

He sat down with an unavoidable air of sullenness.

She stared at him in astonishment, and as she read something of the significant hieroglyphic of his battered face, her lips whitened. Her hand—it was thinner now than in the days of their prosperity, and her first finger was a little altered by the metal punching she did—clenched convulsively. "This horrible world!" she said, and said no more.

In these latter days they had become a very silent couple; they said scarcely a word to each other that night, but each followed a private train of thought. In the small hours, as Elizabeth lay awake, Denton started up beside her suddenly—he had been lying as still as a dead man.

"I cannot stand it!" cried Denton. "I *will* not stand it!"

She saw him dimly, sitting up, saw his arm lunge as if in a furious blow at the enshrouding night. Then for a space he was still.

"It is too much—it is more than one can bear!"

She could say nothing. To her, also, it seemed that this was as far as one could go. She waited through a long stillness. She could see that Denton sat with his arms about his knees, his chin almost touching them.

Then he laughed.

"No," he said at last, "I'm going to stand it. That's the peculiar thing. There isn't a grain of suicide in us—not a grain. I suppose all the people with a turn that way have gone. We're going through with it—to the end."

Elizabeth thought grayly, and realised that this also was true.

"We're going through with it. To think of all who have gone through with

it: all the generations—endless—endless. Little beasts that snapped and snarled, snapping and snarling, snapping and snarling, generation after generation"

His monotone, ended abruptly, resumed after a vast interval.

"There were ninety thousand years of stone age. A Denton somewhere in all those years. Apostolic succession. The grace of going through. Let me see! Ninety—nine hundred—three nines, twenty-seven—*three thousand* generations of men!—men more or less. And each fought, and was bruised, and shamed, and somehow held his own—going through with it—passing it on. . . . And thousands more to come, perhaps—thousands!

"Passing it on. I wonder if they will thank us."

His voice assumed an argumentative note. "If one could find something definite . . . If one could say, 'This is why—this is why it goes on. . . '"

He became still, and Elizabeth's eyes slowly separated him from the darkness until at last she could see how he sat with his head resting on his hand. A sense of the enormous remoteness of their minds came to her, that dim suggestion of another being seemed to her a figure of their mutual understanding. What could he be thinking now? What might he not say next? Another age seemed to elapse before he sighed and whispered: "No. I don't understand it. No!" Then a long interval, and he repeated this. But the second time it had the tone almost of a solution.

She became aware that he was preparing to lie down. She marked his movements, perceived with astonishment how he adjusted his pillow with a careful regard to comfort. He lay down with a sigh of contentment almost. His passion had passed. He lay still, and presently his breathing became regular and deep.

But Elizabeth remained with eyes wide open in the darkness, until the clamour of a bell and the sudden brilliance of the electric light warned them that the Labour Company had need of them for yet another day.

That day came a scuffle with the albino Whitey and the little ferret-faced man Blunt, the swart artist in scrapping, having first let Denton grasp the bearing of his lesson, intervened, not without a certain quality of patronage. "Drop 'is 'air, Whitey, and let the man be," said his gross voice through a shower of indignities. "Can't you see 'e don't know *'ow* to scrap?" And Denton, lying shamefully in the dust, realised that he must accept that course of instruction after all.

He made his apology straight and clean. He scrambled up and walked to Blunt. "I was a fool, and you are right," he said. "If it isn't too late. . . ."

That night, after the second spell, Denton went with Blunt to certain waste and slime-soaked vaults under the Port of London, to learn the first beginnings of the high art of scrapping as it had been perfected in the great world of the underways: how to hit or kick a man so as to hurt him excruciatingly or make him violently sick, how to hit or kick "vital," how to use glass in one's garments as a club and to spread red ruin with various domestic implements, how to anticipate and demolish your adversary's intentions in other directions, all the pleasant devices, in fact, that had grown up among the disinherited of the great cities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, were spread out by a gifted exponent for Denton's learning. Blunt's bashfulness fell from him as the instruction proceeded, and he developed a certain expert dignity, a quality of fatherly consideration. He treated Denton with the utmost considemtion, only "flicking him up a bit" now and then, to keep the interest hot, and roaring with laughter at a happy fluke of Denton's that covered his mouth with blood.

"I'm always keerless of my mouth," said Blunt, admitting a weakness. "Always. It don't seem to matter, like, just getting bashed in the mouth—not

"Brought Whitey's head into the ash-heap that had once received Denton's.

if your chin's all right. Tastin' blood does me good. Always. But I better not 'it you again."

Denton went home, to fall asleep exhausted and wake in the small hours with aching limbs and all his bruises tingling. Was it worth while that he should go on living? He listened to Elizabeth's breathing, and remembering that he must have awaked her the previous night, he lay very still. He was sick with infinite disgust at the new conditions of his life. He hated it all, hated even the genial savage who had protected him so generously. The monstrous fraud of civilisation glared stark before his eyes; he saw it as a vast lunatic growth, producing a

deepening torrent of savagery below, and above ever more flimsy gentility and silly wastefulness. He could see no redeeming reason, no touch of honour, either in the life he had led or in this life to which he had fallen. Civilisation presented itself as some catastrophic product as little concerned with men—save as victims—as a cyclone or a planetary collision. He, and therefore all mankind, seemed living utterly in vain. His mind sought some strange expedients of escape, if not for himself then at least for Elizabeth. But he meant them for himself. What if he hunted up Mwres and told him of their disaster? It came to him as an astonishing thing how utterly Mwres and Bindon had passed out of his range. Where were they? What were they doing? From that he passed to thoughts of utter dishonour. And finally, not arising in any way out of this mental tumult, but ending it as dawn ends the night, came the clear and obvious conclusion of the night before: the conviction that he had to go through with things; that, apart from any remoter view and quite sufficient for all his thought and energy, he had to stand up and fight among his fellows and quit himself like a man.

The second night's instruction was perhaps less dreadful than the first; and the third was even endurable, for Blunt dealt out some praise. The fourth day Denton chanced upon the fact that the ferret-faced man was a coward. There passed a fortnight of smouldering days and feverish instruction at night; Blunt, with many blasphemies, testified that never had he met so apt a pupil; and all night long Denton dreamt of kicks and counters and gouges and cunning tricks. For all that time no further outrages were attempted, for fear of Blunt; and then came the second crisis. Blunt did not come one day—afterwards he admitted his deliberate intention—and through the tedious morning Whitey awaited the interval between the spells with an ostentatious impatience. He knew nothing of the scrapping lessons, and he spent the time in telling Denton and the vault generally of certain disagreeable proceedings he had in mind.

Whitey was not popular, and the vault disgorged to see him haze the new man with only a languid interest. But matters changed when Whitey's attempt to open the proceedings by kicking Denton in the face was met by an excellently executed duck, catch and throw, that completed the flight of Whitey's foot in its orbit and brought Whitey's head into the ash-heap that had once received Denton's. Whitey arose a shade whiter, and now blasphemously bent upon vital injuries. There were indecisive passages, foiled enterprises that deepened Whitey's evidently growing perplexity; and then things developed into a grouping of Denton uppermost with Whitey's throat in his hand, his knee on Whitey's chest, and a tearful Whitey with a black face, protruding tongue and broken finger endeavouring to explain the misunderstanding by means of hoarse sounds. Moreover, it was evident that among the bystanders there had never been a more popular person than Denton.

Denton, with proper precaution, released his antagonist and stood up. His blood seemed changed to some sort of fluid fire, his limbs felt light and supernaturally strong. The idea that he was a martyr in the civilisation machine had vanished from his mind. He was a man in a world of men.

The little ferret-faced man was the first in the competition to pat him on the back. The lender of oil cans was a radiant sun of genial congratulation. . . . It seemed incredible to Denton that he had ever thought of despair.

Denton was convinced that not only had he to go through with things, but that he could. He sat on the canvas pallet expounding this new aspect to Elizabeth. One side of his face was bruised. She had not recently fought, she

had not been patted on the back, there were no hot bruises upon her face, only a pallor and a new line or so about the mouth. She was taking the woman's share. She looked steadfastly at Denton in his new mood of prophecy. "I feel that there is something," he was saying, "something that goes on, a Being of Life in which we live and move and have our being, something that began fifty—a hundred million years ago, perhaps, that goes on—on . growing, spreading, to things beyond us—things that will justify us all . . That will explain and justify my fighting—these bruises, and all the pain of it. It's the chisel—yes, the chisel of the Maker. If only I could make you feel as I feel, if I could make you! You *will*, dear, I know you will."

"No," she said in a low voice. "No, I shall not."

"So I might have thought——"

She shook her head. "No," she said, "I have thought as well. What you say—doesn't convince me."

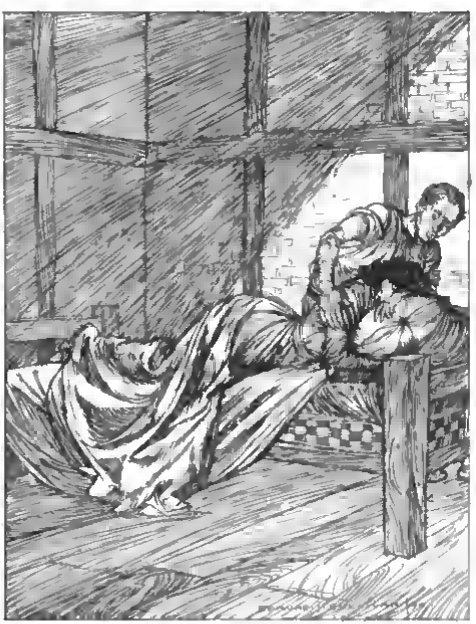
She looked at his face resolutely. "I hate it," she said, and caught at her breath. "You do not understand, you do not think. There was a time when you said things and I believed them. I am growing wiser. You are a man, you can fight, force your way. You do not mind bruises. You can be coarse and ugly, and still a man. Yes—it makes you. It makes you. You are right. Only a woman is not like that. We are different. We have let ourselves get civilised too soon. This underworld is not for us."

She paused and began again.

"I hate it! I hate this horrible canvas! I hate it more than — more than the worst that can happen. It hurts my fingers to touch it. It is horrible to the skin. And the women I work with day after day! I lie awake at nights and think how I may be growing like them. . . ."

She stopped. "I *am* growing like them," she cried passionately.

Denton stared at her distress. "But ——," he said and stopped.



"I cannot bear it!" she cried

"You don't understand. What have I? What have I to save me? *You* can fight. Fighting is man's work. But women—women are different . . . I have thought it all out, I have done nothing but think night and day. Look at the colour of my face! I cannot go on. I cannot endure this life. . . . I cannot endure it."

She stopped. She hesitated.

"You do not know all," she said abruptly, and for an instant her lips had a bitter smile. "I have been asked to leave you."

"Leave me!"

She made no answer save an affirmative movement of the head.

Denton stood up sharply. They stared at one another through a long silence.

Suddenly she turned herself about, and flung face downward upon their canvas bed. She did not sob, she made no sound. She lay still upon her face. After a vast, distressful void her shoulders heaved and she began to weep silently.

"Elizabeth!" he whispered—"Elizabeth!"

Very softly he sat down beside her, bent down, put his arm across her in a doubtful caress, seeking vainly for some clue to this intolerable situation.

"Elizabeth," he whispered in her ear.

She thrust him from her with her hand.

"I cannot bear it!" she cried, and broke out into loud and bitter weeping.

Denton's face changed—became blank dismay. Presently he slipped from the bed and stood on his feet. All the complacency had vanished from his face, had given place to impotent rage. He began to rave and curse at the intolerable forces which pressed upon him, at all the accidents and hot desires and heedlessness that mock the life of man. His little voice rose in that little room, and he shook his fist, this animalcule of the earth, at all that environed him about, at the millions about him, at his past and future and all the insensate vastness of the overwhelming city.

H. G. WELLS.

THE MAGNANIMITY OF THE MAN OF PLEASURE.

A STORY OF THE DAYS TO COME.

(Anno Domini 2097.)

IN Bindon's younger days he had dabbled in speculation and made three brilliant flukes. For the rest of his life he had the wisdom to let gambling alone, and the conceit to believe himself a very clever man. A certain desire for influence and reputation interested him in the business intrigues of the giant city in which his flukes were made. He became at last one of the most influential shareholders in the company that owned the London flying-stages to which the aeroplanes came from all parts of the world. This much for his public activities. In his private life he was a man of pleasure. And this is the story of his heart.

But before proceeding to such depths, one must devote a little time to the exterior of this person. Its physical basis was slender, and short, and dark, and the face, which was fine-featured and assisted by pigments, varied from an insecure self-complacency to an intelligent uneasiness. His face and head had been depilated, according to the cleanly and hygienic fashion of the time, so that the colour and contour of his hair varied with his costume. This he was constantly changing.

At times he would distend himself with pneumatic vestments in the rococo vein. From among the billowy developments of this style, and beneath a translucent and illuminated head-dress, his eye watched jealously for the respect of the less fashionable world. At other times he emphasised his elegant slenderness in close-fitting garments of black satin. For effects of dignity he would assume broad pneumatic shoulders, from which hung a robe of carefully arranged folds of China silk, and a classical Bindon in pink tights was also a transient phenomenon in the eternal pageant of Destiny. In the days when he hoped to marry Elizabeth, he sought to impress and charm her, and at the same time to take off something of his burthen of forty years, by wearing the last fancy of the contemporary buck, a costume of elastic material with distensible warts and horns, changing in colour as he walked, by an ingenious arrangement of versatile chromatophores. And no doubt, if Elizabeth's affections had not been already engaged by the worthless Denton, and if her tastes had not had that odd bias for old-fashioned ways, this extremely *chic* conception would have ravished her. Bindon had consulted Elizabeth's father before presenting himself in this garb—he was one of those men who always invite criticism of their costume—and Mwres had pronounced him all

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"The last fancy of the contemporary buck"

that the heart of woman could desire. But the affair of the hypnotist proved that his knowledge of the heart of woman was incomplete.

Bindon's idea of marrying had been formed some little time before Mwres threw Elizabeth's budding womanhood in his way. It was one of Bindon's most cherished secrets that he had a considerable capacity for a pure and simple life of a grossly sentimental type The thought imparted a sort of pathetic seriousness to the offensive and quite inconsequent and unmeaning excesses, which he was pleased to regard as dashing wickedness, and which a number of good people also were so unwise as to treat in that desirable manner As a consequence of these excesses, and perhaps by reason also of an inherited tendency to early decay, his liver became seriously affected, and he suffered increasing inconvenience when travelling by aeroplane It was during his convalescence from a protracted bilious attack that it occurred to him that in spite of all the terrible fascinations of Vice, if he found a beautiful, gentle, good young woman of a not too violently intellectual type to devote her life to him, he might yet be saved to Goodness, and even rear a spirited family in his likeness to solace his declining years. But, like so many experienced men of the world, he doubted if there were any good women. Of such as he had heard tell he was outwardly sceptical and privately much afraid.

When the aspiring Mwres effected his introduction to Elizabeth, it seemed to him that his good fortune was complete. He fell in love with her at once Of course he had always been falling in love since he was sixteen, in accordance with the extremely varied recipes to be found in the accumulated literature of many centuries. But this was different. This was real love. It seemed to him to call forth all the lurking goodness in his nature. He felt that for her sake he could give up a way of life that had already produced the gravest lesions on his liver

and nervous system. His imagination presented him with idyllic pictures of the life of the reformed rake. He would never be sentimental with her, or silly; but always a little cynical and bitter, as became the past. Yet he was sure she would have an intuition of his real greatness and goodness. And in due course he would confess things to her, pour his version of what he regarded as his wickedness—showing what a complex of Goethe and Benvenuto Cellini and Shelley and all those other chaps he really was—into her shocked, very beautiful, and no doubt sympathetic ear. And preparatory to these things he wooed her with infinite subtlety and respect. And the reserve with which Elizabeth treated him seemed nothing more nor less than an exquisite modesty touched and enhanced by an equally exquisite lack of ideas.

Bindon knew nothing of her wandering affections, nor of the attempt made by Mwres to utilise hypnotism as a corrective to this digression of her heart; he conceived he was on the best of terms with Elizabeth, and had made her quite successfully various significant presents of jewellery and the more virtuous cosmetics, when her elopement with Denton threw the world out of gear for him. His first aspect of the matter was rage begotten of wounded vanity, and as Mwres was the most convenient person, he vented the brunt of it upon him.

He went immediately and insulted the desolate father grossly, and then spent an active and determined day going to and fro about the city and interviewing people in a consistent and partly-successful attempt to ruin that matrimonial speculator. The effectual nature of these activities gave him a temporary exhilaration, and he went to the dining-place he had frequented in his wicked days in a devil-may-care frame of mind, and dined altogether too amply and cheerfully with two other golden youths in the early forties. He threw up the game, no woman was worth being good for, and he astonished even himself by the strain of witty cynicism he developed. One of the other desperate blades, warmed with wine, made a facetious allusion to his disappointment, but at the time this did not seem unpleasant. It rankled, however, next morning.

The next morning found his liver and temper inflamed. He kicked his phonographic-news machine to pieces, dismissed his valet, and resolved that he would perpetrate a terrible revenge upon Elizabeth. Or Denton. Or somebody. But anyhow, it was to be a terrible revenge, and the friend who had made fun of him should no longer see him in the light of a foolish girl's victim. He knew something of the little property that was due to her, and that this would be the only support of the young couple until Mwres should relent. If Mwres did not relent, and if unpropitious things should happen to the affair in which Elizabeth's expectations lay, they would come upon evil times and be sufficiently amenable to temptation of a sinister sort. Bindon's imagination, abandoning its beautiful idealism altogether, expanded the idea of temptation of a sinister sort. He figured himself as the implacable, the intricate and powerful man of wealth pursuing this maiden who had scorned him. And suddenly her image came upon his mind vivid and dominant, and for the first time in his life Bindon realised something of the real power of passion.

His imagination stood aside like a respectful footman who has done his work in ushering in the emotion.

"My God!" cried Bindon. "I *will* have her! If I have to kill myself to get her! And that other fellow——"

After an interview with his medical men and a penance for his overnight excesses in the form of bitter drugs, a mitigated but absolutely resolute Bindon sought out Mwres. Mwres he found properly smashed, and impoverished, and

humble, in a mood of frantic self-preservation, ready to sell himself body and soul, much more any interest in a disobedient daughter, to recover his lost position in the world. In the reasonable discussion that followed, it was agreed that these misguided young people should be left to sink into distress, or possibly even assisted towards that improving discipline by Bindon's financial influence.

"And then?" said Mwres.

"They will come to the Labour Company," said Bindon. "They will wear the blue canvas."

"And then?"

"She will divorce him," he said, and sat for a moment intent upon that prospect. For in those days the austere limitations of divorce of Victorian times were extraordinarily relaxed, and a couple might separate on a hundred different scores.

Then suddenly Bindon astonished himself and Mwres by jumping to his feet. "She *shall* divorce him!" he cried. "I will have it so—I will work it so. By God! it shall be so. He shall be disgraced, so that she must. He shall be smashed and pulverised."

The idea of smashing and pulverising inflamed him further. He began a Jovian pacing up and down the little office. "I will have her," he cried. "I *will* have her! Heaven and hell shall not save me from her!" His passion evaporated in its expression, and left him at the end simply histrionic. He struck an attitude and ignored with heroic determination a sharp twinge of pain about the diaphragm. And Mwres sat with his pneumatic cap deflated and himself very visibly impressed.

And so, with a fair persistency, Bindon set himself to the work of being Elizabeth's malignant providence, using with ingenious dexterity every particle of advantage wealth in those days gave a man over his fellow-creatures. A resort to the consolations of religion hindered these operations not at all. He would go and talk with an interesting, experienced and sympathetic Father of the Huysmanite sect of the Isis cult, about all the irrational little proceedings he was pleased to regard as his heaven-dismaying wickedness, and the interesting, experienced and sympathetic Father, representing Heaven dismayed, would with a pleasing affectation of horror, suggest simple and easy penances, and recommend a monastic foundation that was airy, cool, hygienic, and not vulgarised, for viscerally disordered penitent sinners of the refined and wealthy type. And after these excursions, Bindon would come back to London quite active and passionate again. He would machinate with really considerable energy, and repair to a certain gallery high above the street of moving ways, from which he could view the entrance to the barrack of the Labour Company in the ward which sheltered Denton and Elizabeth. And at last one day he saw Elizabeth go in, and thereby his passion was renewed.

So in the fulness of time the complicated devices of Bindon ripened, and he could go to Mwres and tell him that the young people were near despair.

"It's time for you," he said, "to let your parental affections have play. She's been in blue canvas some months, and they've been cooped together in one of those Labour dens, and the little girl is dead. She knows now what his manhood is worth to her, by way of protection, poor girl. She'll see things now in a clearer light. You go to her—I don't want to appear in this affair yet—and point out to her how necessary it is that she should get a divorce from him . . ."

"She's obstinate," said Mwres doubtfully.

"Spirit!" said Bindon. "She's a wonderful girl—a wonderful girl!"

"She'll refuse."

"Of course she will. But leave it open to her. Leave it open to her. And some day—in that stuffy den, in that irksome, toilsome life they can't help it—*they'll have a quarrel*. And then——"

Mwres meditated over the matter, and did as he was told.

Then Bindon, as he had arranged with his spiritual adviser, went into retreat. The retreat of the Huysmanite sect was a beautiful place, with the sweetest air in London, lit by natural sunlight, and with restful quadrangles of real grass open to the sky, where at the same time the penitent man of pleasure might enjoy all the pleasures of loafing and all the satisfaction of distinguished austerity. And, save for participation in the simple and wholesome dietary of the place and in certain magnificent chants, Bindon spent all his time in meditation upon the theme of Elizabeth, and the extreme purification his soul had undergone since he first saw her, and whether he would be able to get a dispensation to marry her from the experienced and sympathetic Father in spite of the approaching "sin" of her divorce; and then Bindon would lean against a pillar of the quadrangle and lapse into reveries on the superiority of virtuous love to any other form of indulgence. A curious feeling in his back and chest that was trying to attract his attention, a disposition to be hot or shiver, a general sense of ill-health and cutaneous discomfort, he did his best to ignore. All that, of course, belonged to the old life that he was shaking off.

When he came out of retreat he went at once to Mwres to ask for news of Elizabeth. Mwres was clearly under the impression that he was an exemplary father, profoundly touched about the heart by his child's unhappiness. "She was pale," he said, greatly moved; "she was pale. When I asked her to come away and leave him—and be happy—she put her head down upon the table"—Mwres sniffed—"and cried."

His agitation was so great that he could say no more.

"Ah!" said Bindon, respecting this manly grief.

"Oh!" said Bindon quite suddenly, with his hand to his side.

Mwres looked up sharply out of the pit of his sorrows, startled. "What's the matter?" he asked, visibly concerned.

"A most violent pain. Excuse me! You were telling me about Elizabeth."

And Mwres, after a decent solicitude for Bindon's pain, proceeded with his report. It was even unexpectedly hopeful. Elizabeth, in her first emotion at discovering that her father had not absolutely deserted her, had been frank with him about her sorrows and disgusts.

"Yes," said Bindon, magnificently, "I shall have her yet."

And then that novel pain twitched him for the second time.

For these lower pains the priest was comparatively ineffectual, inclining rather to regard the body and them as mental illusions amenable to contemplation; so Bindon took them to a man of a class he loathed, a medical man of extraordinary repute and morality. "We must go all over you," said the medical man, and did so with the most disgusting frankness. "Did you ever bring any children into the world?" asked this gross materialist among other impertinent questions.

"Not that I know of," said Bindon, too amazed to stand upon his dignity.

"Ah!" said the medical man, and proceeded with his punching and sounding. Medical science in those days was just reaching the beginnings of precision. "You'd better go right away," said the medical man, "and make the Euthanasia. The sooner the better."

Bindon gasped. He had been trying not to understand the technical explanations and anticipations in which the medical man had indulged.

"I say!" he said "But do you mean to say . . . Your science . . ."

"Nothing," said the medical man "A few opiates. The thing is your own doing, you know, to a certain extent."

"I was sorely tempted in my youth."

"It's not that so much. But you come of a bad stock. Even if you'd have taken precautions you'd have had bad times to wind up with. The mistake was getting born. The indiscretions of the parents. . . . And you've shirked exercise, and so forth."

"I had no one to advise me."

"Medical men are always willing."

"I was a spirited young fellow."

"We won't argue; the mischief's done now. You've lived. We can't start you again. You ought never to have started at all. Frankly—the Euthanasia!"

Bindon hated him in silence for a space. Every word of this brutal expert jarred upon his refinement. He was so gross, so impermeable to all the subtler issues of being. But it is no good picking a quarrel with a doctor. "My religious beliefs," he said. "I don't approve of suicide."

"You've been doing it all your life."

"Well, anyhow, I've come to take a serious view of life now."

"You're bound to, if you go on living. You'll hurt. But for practical purposes it's late. However, if you mean to do that—perhaps I'd better mix you a little something. You'll hurt a great deal. These little twinges——"

"Twinges!"

"Mere preliminary notices."

"How long can I go on? I mean, before I hurt—really."

"You'll get it hot soon. Perhaps three days."

Bindon tried to argue for an extension of time, and in the midst of his pleading gasped, put his hand to his side. Suddenly the extraordinary pathos of his life came to him clear and vivid. "It's hard," he said "It's infernally hard! I've been no man's enemy but my own. I've always treated everybody quite fairly."

The medical man stared at him without any sympathy for some seconds. He was reflecting how excellent it was that there were no more Bindons to carry on that line of pathos. He felt quite optimistic. Then he turned to his telephone and ordered up a prescription from the Central Pharmacy.

He was interrupted by a voice behind him "By God!" cried Bindon—"I'll have her yet!"

The physician stared over his shoulder at Bindon's expression, and then altered the prescription.

So soon as this painful interview was over, Bindon gave way to rage. He settled that the medical man was not only an unsympathetic brute and wanting in the first beginnings of a gentleman, but also highly incompetent, and he went off to four other practitioners in succession, with a view to the establishment of this intuition. But to guard against surprises he kept that little prescription in his pocket. With each he began by expressing his grave doubts of the first doctor's intelligence, honesty and professional knowledge, and then stated his symptoms, suppressing only a few more material facts in each case. These were always subsequently elicited by the doctor. In spite of the welcome depreciation of another practitioner, none of these eminent specialists would give Bindon any hope of eluding the anguish and helplessness that loomed now close upon him. To the last of them he unburthened his mind of an accumulated disgust with

"'I'll have her yet!' cried Bindon"

medical science. "After centuries and centuries," he exclaimed hotly; "and you can do nothing—except admit your helplessness. I say, 'save me'—and what do you do?"

"No doubt it's hard on you," said the doctor. "But you should have taken precautions."

"How was I to know?"

"It wasn't our place to run after you," said the medical man, picking a thread of cotton from his purple sleeve. "Why should we save *you* in particular? You

see—from our point of view—people with imaginations and passions like yours have to go—they have to go."

"Go?"

"Die out. It's an eddy."

He was a young man with a serene face. He smiled at Bindon. "We get on with research, you know; we give advice when people have the sense to ask for it. And we bide our time."

"Bide your time?"

"We hardly know enough yet to take over the management, you know."

"The management?"

"You needn't be anxious. Science is young yet. It's got to keep on growing for a few generations. We know enough now to know we don't know enough yet . . . But the time is coming all the same. *You* won't see the time. But, between ourselves, you rich men and party bosses, with your natural play of the passions and patriotism, and religion and so forth, have made rather a mess of things, haven't you? These Underways; and all that sort of thing Some of us have a sort of fancy that in time we may know enough to take over a little more than the ventilation and drains. Knowledge keeps on piling up, you know. It keeps on growing And there's not the slightest hurry for a generation or so. Some day—some day, men will live in a different way." He looked at Bindon and meditated. "There'll be a lot of dying out before that day can come."

Bindon attempted to point out to this young man how silly and irrelevant such talk was to a sick man like himself; how impertinent and uncivil it was to him, an older man occupying a position in the official world of extraordinary power and influence. He insisted that a doctor was paid to cure people—he laid great stress on "*paid*"—and had no business to glance even for a moment at "these other questions." "But we do," said the young man, insisting upon facts; and Bindon lost his temper.

His indignation carried him home. That these incompetent impostors, who were unable to save the life of a really influential man like himself, should dream of some day robbing the legitimate property owners of social control, of inflicting one knew not what tyranny upon the world. Curse science! He fumed over the intolerable prospect for some time, and then the pain returned, and he recalled the made-up prescription of the first doctor, still happily in his pocket He took a dose forthwith

It calmed and soothed him greatly, and he could sit down in his most comfortable chair beside his library (of phonographic records), and think over the altered aspect of affairs. His indignation passed, his anger and his passion crumbled under the subtle attack of that prescription, pathos became his sole ruler. He stared about him, at his magnificent and voluptuously appointed apartment, at his statuary and discreetly veiled pictures, and all the evidences of a cultivated and elegant wickedness; he touched a stud, and the sad pipings of Tristan's shepherd attendant filled the air His eye wandered from one object to another. They were costly and gross and florid—but they were his. They presented in concrete form his ideals, his conceptions of beauty and desire, his idea of all that was precious in life. And now—he must leave it all, like a common man. He was, he felt, a slender and delicate flame, burning out. So must all life flame up and pass, he thought His eyes filled with tears

Then it came into his head that he was alone. Nobody cared for him, nobody needed him. At any moment he might begin to hurt vividly He might even howl. Nobody would mind. According to all the doctors he would have

excellent reason for howling in a day or so. It recalled what his spiritual adviser had said of the decline of faith and fidelity, the degeneration of the age. He beheld himself as a pathetic proof of this; he, the subtle, able, important,

"Nobody cared for him, not any needed him"

voluptuous, cynical, complex Bindon, possibly howling, and not one faithful simple creature in all the world to howl in sympathy. Not one faithful simple soul was there—no shepherd to pipe to him! Had all such faithful simple creatures vanished from this harsh and urgent earth? He wondered whether the horrid

vulgar crowd that perpetually went about the city could possibly know what he thought of them. If they did he felt sure *some* would try to earn a better opinion. Surely the world went from bad to worse. It was becoming impossible for Bindons. Perhaps some day . . He was quite sure that the one thing he had needed in life was sympathy. For a time he regretted that he left no sonnets—no enigmatical pictures or something of that sort behind him to carry on his being until at last the sympathetic mind should come . . .

It seemed incredible to him that this that came was extinction Yet his sympathetic spiritual guide was in this matter annoyingly figurative and vague. Curse science! It had condemned all faith—all hope. To go out, to vanish from theatre and street, from office and dining-place, from the dear eyes of womankind. And not to be missed! On the whole to leave the world happier!

He reflected that he had never worn his heart upon his sleeve. Had he after all been *too* unsympathetic? Few people could suspect how subtly profound he really was beneath the mask of that cynical gaiety of his. They would not understand the loss they had suffered. Elizabeth, for example, had not suspected . . . .

He had reserved that. His thoughts having come to Elizabeth gravitated about her for some time How *little* Elizabeth understood him!

That thought became intolerable. Before all other things he must set that right. He realised that there was still something for him to do in life, his struggle against Elizabeth was even yet not over. He could never overcome her now, as he had hoped and prayed But he might still impress her!

From that idea he expanded He might impress her profoundly—he might impress her so that she should for evermore regret her treatment of him. The thing that she must realise before everything else was his magnanimity His magnanimity! Yes! he had loved her with amazing greatness of heart. He had not seen it so clearly before—but of course he was going to leave her all his property. He saw it instantly, as a thing determined and inevitable She would think how good he was, how spaciously generous; surrounded by all that makes life tolerable from his hand, she would recall with infinite regret her scorn and coldness. And when she sought expression for that regret, she would find that occasion gone for ever, she would be met by a locked door, by a disdainful stillness, by a white dead face. He closed his eyes and remained for a space imagining himself that white dead face.

From that he passed to other aspects of the matter, but his determination was assured. He meditated the matter elaborately before he took action, for the drug he had taken inclined him to a lethargic and dignified melancholy. In certain respects he modified details. If he left all his property to Elizabeth it would include the voluptuously appointed room he occupied, and for many reasons he did not care to leave that to her On the other hand, it had to be left to some one. In his clogged condition this worried him extremely

In the end he decided to leave it to the sympathetic exponent of the fashionable religious cult, whose conversation had been so pleasing in the past. "*He* will understand," said Bindon, with a sentimental sigh "He knows what Evil means—he understands something of the Stupendous Fascination of the Sphinx of Sin. Yes—he will understand." By that phrase it was that Bindon was pleased to dignify certain unhealthy and undignified departures from sane conduct to which a misguided vanity and an ill-controlled curiosity had led him. He sat for a space thinking how very Hellenic and Italian and Neronic, and all those things, he had been. Even now—might one not try a sonnet? A penetrating voice to echo down the ages, sensuous, sinister, and sad. For a space he forgot

Elizabeth. In the course of half an hour he spoilt three phonographic coils, got a headache, took a second dose to calm himself, and reverted to magnanimity and his former design.

At last he faced the unpalatable problem of Denton. It needed all his newborn magnanimity before he could swallow the thought of Denton; but at last this greatly misunderstood man, assisted by his sedative and the near approach of death, effected even that. If he was at all exclusive about Denton, if he should display the slightest distrust, if he attempted any specific exclusion of that young man, she might—*misunderstand*! Yes—she should have her Denton still. His magnanimity must go even to that. He tried to think only of Elizabeth in the matter.

He rose with a sigh, and limped across to the telephonic apparatus that communicated with his solicitor. In ten minutes a will duly attested and with its proper thumb mark signature lay in the solicitor's office three miles away. And then for a space Bindon sat very still.

Suddenly he started out of a vague reverie, and pressed an investigatory hand to his side.

Then he jumped eagerly to his feet and rushed to the telephone.

The Euthanasia Company had rarely been called by a client in a greater hurry.

So it came at last that Denton and his Elizabeth, against all hope, returned unseparated from the labour servitude to which they had fallen. Elizabeth came out from her cramped subterranean den of metal-beaters and all the sordid circumstances of blue canvas, as one comes out of a nightmare. Back towards the sunlight their fortune took them; once the bequest was known to them, the bare thought of another day's hammering became intolerable. They went up long lifts and stairs to levels that they had not seen since the days of their disaster. At first she was full of this sensation of escape: even to think of the underways was intolerable, only after many months could she begin to recall with sympathy the faded women who were still below there, murmuring scandals and reminiscences and folly, and tapping away their lives.

Her choice of the apartments they presently took expressed the vehemence of her release. They were rooms upon the very verge of the city; they had a roof space and a balcony upon the city wall, wide open to the sun and wind, the country and the sky.

And in that balcony comes the last scene in this story. It was a summer sunsetting, and the hills of Surrey were very blue and clear. Denton leant upon the balcony regarding them, and Elizabeth sat by his side. Very wide and spacious was the view, for their balcony hung five hundred feet above the ancient level of the ground. The oblongs of the Fond Company, broken here and there by the ruins—grotesque little holes and sheds—of the ancient suburbs, and intersected by shining streams of sewage, passed at last into a remote diapering at the foot of the distant hills. On those further slopes gaunt machines of unknown import worked slackly at the end of their spell, and the hill crest was set with stagnant wind vanes. Along the great south road the Labour Company's field labourers, in huge wheeled mechanical vehicles, were hurrying back to their meals, their last spell finished. And through the air a dozen little private aeropiles sailed down towards the city. Familiar scene as it was to the eyes of Denton and Elizabeth, it would have filled the minds of their ancestors with incredulous amazement. Denton's mind fluttered towards the future in a vain attempt at picturing what that scene might be in another two hundred years, and, recoiling, turned towards the past.

"Denton leant upon the balcony regarding them, Elizabeth by his side"

He shared something of the growing knowledge of the time, he could picture the quaint smoke-grimed Victorian city, with its narrow little roads of beaten earth, its wide common-land, ill-organised, ill-built suburbs, and irregular enclosures, the old countryside of the Stuart times, with its little villages and its petty London, the England of the monasteries, the far older England of the Roman dominion, and then before that a wild country with here and there the huts of some warring tribe. These huts must have come and gone and come again through a space of years that made the Roman camp and villa seem but yesterday, and before those years, before even the huts, there had been men in the valley. Even then—so recent had it all been when one judged it by the standard of geological time—this valley had been here, and those hills yonder, higher, perhaps, and snow-tipped, had still been yonder hills, and the Thames had flowed down from the Cotswolds to the sea. But the men had been but the shapes of men, creatures of darkness and ignorance, victims of beasts and floods, storms and pestilence, and incessant hunger. Already some at least of these enemies were overcome . . .

For a time Denton pursued the thoughts of this spacious vision, trying in obedience to his instinct to find his place and proportion in the scheme.

"It has been chance," he said; "it has been luck. We have come through. It happens we have come through. Not by any strength of our own . . .

"And yet . . . . No. I don't know."

He was silent for a long time before he spoke again.

"After all—there is a long time yet. There have scarcely been men for twenty thousand years—and there has been life for twenty millions. And what are generations? What are generations? It is enormous, and we are so little. Yet we know—we feel. We are not dumb atoms, we are part of it—part of it—to the limits of our strength and will. Even to die is part of it. Whether we die or live, we are in the making . . . .

"As time goes on—*perhaps*—men will be wiser . . . Wiser .

"Will they ever understand?"

He became silent again.

Elizabeth said nothing to these things, but she regarded his dreaming face with infinite affection. Her mind was not very active that evening. A great contentment possessed her. After a time she laid a gentle hand on his beside her. He fondled it softly, still looking out upon the spacious gold-woven view. So they sat as the sun went down. Until presently Elizabeth shivered.

Denton recalled himself abruptly from these spacious issues of his leisure, and went in to fetch her a shawl.

H. G. WELLS.

THE NUN.

SEEN as the light of a Star
Trembling alone and afar!
Never the deep, sweet soul of her
Gloriously shown;
Never the warm life's whole of her
Made a man's own.

Heard as the song of a Saint
Distant and pure and faint!
Never the full heart's truth of her
Flung from above;
Never the rich, ripe youth of her
Lavished in love.

Felt but as kisses that seem
To melt on the lips in a dream!
And O! might the heaven that holds her
But once be transgressed!
But once might this heart that enfolds her
Beat on her breast!

ADA BARTRICK BAKER

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OH, heart of mine, through all these perfect days,
Whether of white Decembers or green Mays,
There runs a dark thought like a creeping snake,
Or like a black thread, which by some mistake
Life has strung the pearls of happy years;
A thought which borders all my joy with tears.

SOME day, some day, or you, or I alone,
Must look upon the scenes we two have known
Must tread the self-same paths we two have trod,
And cry in vain to one who is with God,
To lean down from the Silent Realms and say,
"I love you" in the old familiar way

SOME day—and each day, beauteous though it be,
Brings closer that dread hour for you or me
Fleet footed Joy, who hurries time along,
Is yet a secret foe who does us wrong.
Speeding us gaily, though he well doth know
Of yonder pathway where but one may go.

AY, one will go To go is
sweet, I wis—
Yet God must needs in-
vent some special bliss
To make His Paradise
seem very dear
To one who goes and
leaves the other here.
To sever souls so bound by love and time,
For any one but God, would be a crime.

YET Death will entertain his
own, I think.
To one who stays, life
gives the gall to drink.
To one who stays, or be
it you or me,
There waits the Garden
of Gethsemane.
O dark, inevitable and awful day,
When one of us must go and one must stay!

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

IN THE HAUNTED RUINS.

HERE gloomed the essenced darkness of the night.
Within this death-bound court the shadows lay
As pall on coffin, and the moon's cold ray
Came wan and dreary, as a ghost of light.

The sombre wind that crept on viewless wing
Sang sorrow to the leaves, which drew their breath
In gasping flutters, as a man near death.
The ivy looked and listened, shivering

The wasting walls that loomed within the place
Seemed there and then to rot before my sight;
A crumbling stone went crashing through the night
To fatten refuse at the rampart's base.

The ruin reeked of death—I fain would cease
Of sympathy. But bats, a living shroud
And knell of falling stone now cried aloud
That here, in death's own heart, there was no peace.

The sense of mystery grew stronger, so
My soul seemed strangling, and I turned to see
Across my shoulder that which followed me
In monstrous, haunting shape of hopeless woe.

I stumbled on a slimy root the gloom
Concealed, I clutched the ivy mesh that hung
Upon the wall; the wreathing tendrils clung
And writhed like serpent wanton in a tomb.

The death-cold kisses lay upon my face;
I strained against the thousand finger-clasps
My folly drew about me, whilst my gasps
Woke fearful echoes in that voiceless place.

From out my toiling sighs grew fleet alarm;
The breath I spent returned upon my ear
With swollen din, in mocking hiss of fear,
In gibing whisper fraught with phantom harm.

The nameless thronging terrors of the
night
Swift clustered round me, crowded close;
they called
In anguished longing, by the dark appalled—
They loathed the gloom, though blind and dead to light.

I cried aloud in ecstasy of dread;
The horrors seen, and those I could not see,
Yet knew, these rioted in mockery,
Foul phantasy of life among the dead.

My shout of terror grew and sped—it crossed
The court, to beat upon the heedless stone;
The hateful phantoms made the sound their own
And sent it pealing—laughter of the lost.

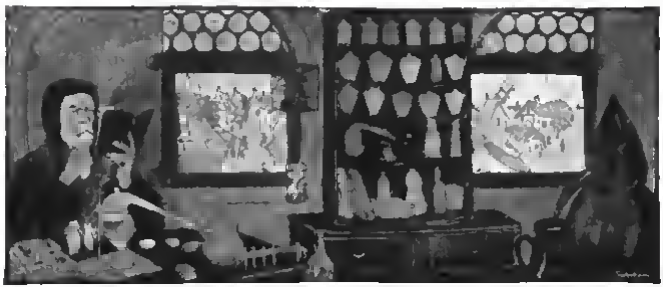
An answer came, a flow of dainty sound
Like nectar falling into crystal bowl,
A jewel-flash of song that pierced my soul
And strewed a subtle splendour wide around.

So rudely loosed from out its bond of sleep,
The startled bird had scarce unclosed its eyes
Ere it had voiced an answer to my cries,
A melody that made my heart-strings leap.

O notes of bliss, of holy joyousness,
O theme of fair delight and purest love!
God gave the bird a gift,—to soar above
The earth and hear the songs that heaven bless.

The music came as voice of faith divine.
I know not if the evil spirits fled
Or if they stayed But peace and gladness wed
Flew with the song from God's own heart to mine

MARVIN DANA.



THE UNSEEN WORLD.

AT the corner of Hennock Common, but hidden from sight by a ring of beeches, stands a gaunt stucco house, built, as its architect fondly imagined, in the Italian style. Its commonplace appearance was worthy of its origin. Solomon Swainson, one time mayor of Bannington, built the house on retiring from business in the earlier part of the Queen's reign, and settled down to farm fifty acres of land and establish himself among the county families. His only child, a delicate youth, was at first sent abroad to manage a branch of the business in Hamburg, but his constitution soon broke down under the strain of office life, and he returned to England. For many years father and son lived together, but unhappily. The old merchant desired his son to marry and raise up heirs to the respectable name of Swainson, and this Paul Swainson, on the ground of his health, steadily refused to do. In 1870 the father died. The son, who remained unmarried, lived on in the house, adored by the poor of the village, till the year 1882, when, after a sudden and brief illness, he followed his father to the grave. Then the house passed by his will to a distant cousin, a delicate and singularly refined woman, who had unaccountably married a man with no other good quality than great physical strength.

But almost immediately after their arrival, Mrs. Kirby began to pine and droop. Her health became feebler and feebler, and after vainly struggling to fight against the inevitable, she took to the sofa, and lived the life of a confirmed invalid. Her husband treated her with comparative kindness, but continued to live his own life, and thus the fragile little woman, probably to her own great joy, was left for many hours alone in the cheerless rooms of Hennock House. The loneliness of this amiable lady touched the heart of old Dr. Sparkes, who lived in the cottage which stands on the other side of the Common, and he generally managed to pay the invalid an informal visit at least once a day.

On one of these occasions he found her in the dining-room lying almost in a state of nervous prostration. Her cheeks were sunken and white, her eyes bright with the fire of fever. She lay on the sofa in a crouching position, a handkerchief limp with unnatural perspiration twisted in her thin hands.

"Why do you choose this room, my dear lady?" the doctor demanded. "It's the ughest and the dullest in the whole house. What you want, ma'am, is brightness, plenty of sunshine, plenty of colour, plenty of cheerful things about you. Why, this room, bless my soul, hasn't got a nice thing in it, except yourself.

And look how you've placed the sofa! The only thing you can see besides that funereal bookcase is the portrait of Paul Swainson! That's a fine thing for an invalid to stare at all day, isn't it?"

"Don't you like it, the portrait?" Her eyes were raised to the picture, and she spoke with more eagerness than was her custom.

"As a picture for an invalid to look at, no, and a very decided no, too," answered the doctor.

"It is such a restful face," she said gently. "It does me good to study it. He was the only saint I ever knew, and his is the only face I can look at, and look at, and look at, without weariness. Even an indifferent artist could not help feeling its spell. Those sad deep eyes are alive still with pity and compassion, the mouth still smiles gravely and sweetly through the beard. Look, Dr Sparkes, doesn't it seem to you very like, strangely like Leonardo's Christ?"

"My dear ma'am," said the old doctor, taking off his eyeglasses and laying a hand on hers, "Paul Swainson was a saint, and I knew him as well as you did, and I loved him; but that's not the point. I call his face beautiful too; but melancholy makes it beautiful, and melancholy, be it never so beautiful, is the last thing for an invalid to be always admiring. Do you understand me?"

Mrs. Kirby leaned forward and looked eagerly and intently into the old man's eyes.

"You have lived a long time in the world," she said, "and you are a man of science; tell me truthfully—promise me that it shall be truthfully—whether you believe in ghosts?"

"Ah! that's what I thought," cried the doctor, drawing down the corners of his mouth. "Now, you don't stay in this room any more, and if I can manage it, you don't live in this gloomy old house another week. Ghosts, ma'am, ghosts!" he said sternly: "do you take me for a nursery-maid? Do you take me for a—for a —for a village idiot, ma'am? Ghosts! Why——"

But she stopped him. "Please don't be like my husband," she pleaded; "I want you to be sympathetic, and I want you to listen." She turned on her side, and stared fixedly with burning eyes into the doctor's troubled face. "I believe," she said slowly, "I believe implicitly and beyond all questioning that there is a ghost in this house. I have never seen it, I have never heard it; I have never touched it. But I feel it is here; I feel—how can I explain?—that it is always here, pervading the house, permeating everything about me. And, dear Doctor Sparkes, I dream about it. In my dreams it comes closer to me, much closer to me, but not so close that I can see it, or understand what it means. It is not the ghost of the nursery-maid; it is the ghost of truth, the ghost of utter reality, and—and it frightens me because of its dumb, invisible helplessness."

The white haired doctor thrust his eyeglasses between the buttons of his waistcoat and rose from his chair. "Ma'am, I will treat you as a sane woman, and talk to you as I would talk to a sane woman. When one goes to a lunatic asylum, the people there tell one of things they have seen, things they have heard. Do we believe them? They are as convinced of their reality and truth as you are of this unsubstantial and invisible ghost of yours, but do we believe them? Do we believe them? Certainly not, and neither do I believe you. You're not an idiot, my dear lady, and as far as I can see there's no reason why you should become one, but your nerves are not in a normal state, and they're playing you pranks—damned silly pranks, too!"

He picked up his broad-brimmed hat, and, as was the old fellow's habit at the end of a visit, put it on his head.

"Give your servants orders to pack up your trunks. You'll go out of this house

to-morrow. Mind, to-morrow! I'll see Mr. Kirby now, and tell him to telegraph for rooms at Scarborough or Whitby. All you've got to do is to give orders about the boxes. I'll be at the station to-morrow to kiss your hand. Goodbye, ma'am."

After he had told Mrs. Kirby's maid to sit with her mistress and keep her amused, Dr. Sparkes mounted his gig and drove over to Banningford to find Mr. Kirby. And the end of it all was, that the Kirbys left Hennock House, first for a season, but ultimately for good. Then, some few months after their departure, Dr. Sparkes, whose practice was a very old and extensive one, made arrangements for a partner; and Hubert Low, son of a famous London physician, came into occupation of old Solomon Swainson's stucco house. He was a man who had studied medicine only to please his father; his own tastes lay wholly in the direction of a rural life. Had he been a poet he might have written the Eleventh Satire of Juvenal. For luxury he had a constitutional dislike, for simplicity a passionate devotion; powerful in body, the restraints of existence in a city were to him as chains to a captive: life unfettered—free, wild, barbarian life—was what nature had intended him for, but civilisation had been so far successful in warring with his disposition as to make English country life appear in his eyes the most desirable form of existence. But in spite of this longing after simplicity, and in spite of a vigorous contempt of vice in all its many shapes, Hubert Low was nothing of the saint. He was too healthy an animal ever to crawl into a cloister. He loved life—loved it for itself—loved it for the joys it gave him. He loved woods and rivers, but chiefly for the birds and fish that lay there for his rod and gun; he loved soft stretches of undulating green fields, but loved them because of the long gallops they gave him after fox and hare. Like so many healthy young Englishmen, "a primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more."

When he announced his intention of taking Hennock House and farming the fields that lay at the back of the ugly mansion, Dr. Sparkes told him the story of Mrs. Kirby's ghost.

"Well, sir," said the young man, "I'm not afraid of ghosts, but if I find any of that solemn old furniture creaking and cracking in a ghostly way, I'll fire the whole lot of it out of doors and send for the latest and newest-looking stuff from Maple's. That ought to keep 'em away, even if my tobacco doesn't."

And now a strange thing came to pass. The active and vigorous young man began suddenly to pine and droop. Without any warning the gaiety went out of him, and a settled gloom took possession of his mind. Stranger even than this, he did not seem to be aware of this startling change. When the old doctor asked him if he was feeling ill, he turned with surprise in his eyes and asked what could make him put such a question. If any of his patients remarked that he looked ill, "Only a little tired," was his invariable answer. But the colour had died from his cheeks, the broad, deep chest was shrunken and contracted, and all the buoyancy and vivacity of his character had deserted him. He spent long hours indoors, mooned aimlessly over the fields, and went about his professional work with a mechanical regularity which a week before the older man had rather desired in his youthful and erratic partner. In brief, and the contrast is severe, he was the very negative of his former self.

But he would not allow that he was ill, scouted the idea with some show of energy, and instantly changed the subject whenever inquirers after his health persisted in their solicitations. After some weeks of this unsatisfactory state of things Dr. Sparkes determined to remonstrate with him seriously, and one night he dropped in to dinner for this purpose.

Low had just come in from the fields, and the visitor was fresh from pottering among his flowers. They sat down to dinner in their rough clothes, and without a lamp. The windows were open, and between the trees they could see the splintered sunbeams, and from afar hear the merrymaking of harvesters loading the last waggon. Their conversation was about agriculture and the shooting prospects.

At dessert the servant brought in a lamp and set it on the table. Then Dr. Sparkes turned his chair round and faced his host.

"It seems just as if I were sitting with Paul Swainson again," he said. "Why, I don't believe you've altered the furniture in a single particular. There's the old sideboard in the same place, and there's that hideous and useless glass bookcase, and there's the portrait of old Solomon Swainson, and there's poor Paul—why, it's the same room as I sat in nearly twenty years ago."

Low was filling his pipe, and he did not answer for a moment. Then, looking up at the portrait of Paul Swainson, he said: "That's an interesting face. It's the face of a man living what we call the Christ-life, carrying a cross with him all through his existence, and never murmuring. Most of us carry crosses, but most of us kick against 'em. I wonder if he had a story."

"What I think the saddest of all stories," said the old doctor. "He inherited a constitution that made marriage impossible for an honourable man, and he never got through a single day without pain. There's only one thing worse than that, whatever sentimentalists say—and that's hunger; bodily hunger's the devil."

Low was still looking at the portrait, his unlighted pipe in his hand. "I'm that man's antithesis," he said, with a yawn: "I never had a pain that I didn't grumble at, I never had a scruple that I didn't strangle if it stood in the way of my happiness, and I never cared a hang for making other people happy. And yet somehow I feel I could have got on with that—what's his name? Paul Swainson." He took up his pipe and struck a match.

"How long have you felt that?" asked Sparkes, pursing up his mouth.

"Ah! that's a queer thing." He dropped the match in his finger-bowl and faced the old doctor with almost an interested expression in his eyes. "When I first saw that picture I wanted to take it down, it worried me, it jarred on my nerves. I hate sad books, I hate sad plays, and I hate sad faces. I thought that portrait was the most melancholy picture I had ever seen. The man's expression of quiet, patient suffering seemed to reproach me for my second glass of port, for my tobacco, for my habit of shouting a hunting-song." He yawned languidly. "Then I grew accustomed to it, and forgot it."

"And now," said the other, "you're fascinated by its melancholy, eh? That's a bad sign, Low. You're losing ground, your good health's deserting you. What's the matter?"

"Only infernal laziness; nothing more. I'm not properly acclimatised yet. The truth is, I can hardly keep my eyes open now."

"Why not try a change of air? Run up to London and see your father. What d'ye think of that? London's a fine tonic, in small doses."

"No, I think I'll stay and get used to the air. I'm all right really. It's only laziness. Won't you have some more whisky? and please take another cigar."

"But Hennock air oughtn't to rob you of your colour, my boy. To be frank with you, all your vivacity's gone. Your eyes have lost their animation, your walk its elasticity——"

"Come, sir, you're an alarmist!" Low protested. "I assure you the looking-glass doesn't tell me that tale. You'll have to let me examine your eyes! In the meantime, do let me give you some more whisky."

There was a tone of annoyance in his voice, and the old man, unwilling to pursue a distasteful subject, lit a fresh cigar and returned to bucolic topics. But while they talked of turnips and corn, partridges and hares, the white-haired doctor kept his eyes fixed on Low's face, and noticed how the greyness deepened in his cheeks, how the languor increased in his eyes, and how laboriously he was struggling to stifle his yawns. He also noticed that when the yawn triumphed over these efforts the young man immediately poured himself out a fresh and a much stronger supply of whisky.

But as the moments slipped by, and under the soothing influence of tobacco, perhaps, Dr. Sparkes forgot to note his observations, and began to talk about autumn roses, and gradually to lose himself in that congenial topic. He talked continuously for a long time, and it was not until the subject was almost exhausted that he noticed, with a little irritation it must be confessed, that his host was sound asleep.

And it took the old gentleman a considerable time to rouse the slumberer. There was no sudden awakening and sleepily murmured apology. The eyes opened slowly, hardly disclosing the pupils, and closed again. Five several times did this happen, before the worn-out young doctor collected his scattered senses; then he rose slowly, shook himself languorously, rubbed his knuckles into his eyes, and yawning like a sleepy schoolboy followed his guest listlessly to the door.

"I'm frightfully sorry, sir," he said "the truth is I'm run down. I feel as if I could sleep for a week!"

"You're ill," the other rejoined, "and take my word for it, you ought to consult your father." He turned on the steps, and saw Low in the act of stifling a yawn; then he passed into the night.

The door closed behind him with a heavy clang.

Low shut and bolted the windows, lit a candle, and turned out the lamp. With his pipe and the spluttering candle in the same hand, and the decanter of whisky in the other, he moved to the door. But half-way across the room he paused. Then he raised the candle, now burning steadily and brightly, and looked at the portrait of Paul Swanson. For a moment the intense lassitude died away, the eyes shone with dawning animation, and there was only the ruffled hair and disordered clothes to suggest his old languor. After a moment he resumed his walk, shut the door behind him, and climbed slowly to his bedroom.

His first act on arriving there was to light his pipe at the candle, and his second, to pour himself out a dose of neat whisky.

"This ought to make me feel a little less dead," he thought, and tossed off the spirit. The quickened action of his heart brought the blood to his cheeks, and for a moment he looked fresh again.

He walked to the broad cheval glass in the corner of his room and looked at himself long and critically.

"I wonder if I am ill, after all?" he muttered "I look devilish grey. I look, yes, I do look ill. But I'm not I'm only tired. Only tired, wretchedly tired."

He passed a sponge of cold water over his face, picked up a hair-brush, and returned to the glass.

"It's my hair that makes me look ill A man with his hair ruffled always looks dirty and seedy. There, I'm recovered already! Hang it, I look deucedly vigorous and healthy. There can't be anything seriously the mat——" A yawn interrupted his soliloquy. "I'm sleepy, frightfully, overwhelmingly sleepy."

He threw away the hair-brush, put down his pipe and began to undress. In

the midst of this operation he walked suddenly to the door and locked it. But on his way back to the dressing-table he stopped

"Now, why the devil did I do that? My nerves are going wrong." He returned to the door and unlocked it. "That ought to cure 'em," he said, "but when a man's in my condition he gets funky, I'm just in the right state of health to night to see that beastly ghost. I'm jumpy—really jumpy."

He got into bed, blew out the candle, and fell instantly asleep. His last thought was the comforting reflection that if his nerves were really wrong he could not possibly feel so abominably sleepy. But if his sleep was deep it was to be grievously troubled. For while he lay there, suddenly and without warning of any kind, there appeared to descend upon him out of the darkness some infuriated spectre, huge, but without form, tremendous, but invisible to the eye. He was appalled by its vehemence and terrified by its unsubstantiality. It descended upon him silently and yet strenuously. Its vastness covered him. He lay fighting and wrestling in black darkness with this prodigious and impalpable foe. And in the dream-struggle there was no light, no knowledge of anything beyond his grim and terrible battle for life. The noise of churning waters was in his ears, a sense of suffocation overwhelmed him; the unseen phantom crushed back his strained and cracking limbs, and pressed down upon his lungs with irresistible and inexpressible force. The blood danced to his eyes, his brain boiled hot in his skull. The world seemed to have hurled him from her solid earth as a man flings a noisome insect from his hand; he felt himself hurtling through the trackless void enveloped by this monstrous clinging force. He was alone with it. There was no sense of things outside or beyond it. The spectre and he were in utter possession of space. And it was killing him, slowly and deliberately killing him. What use to struggle? His breath was at its last gasp, his chest was bursting, the wall of his brain was bending outwards. He was suffocating. Even the phantom was forgotten now. He had no other thought than this of his own annihilation. He was dying, he was dying. That was all now—dying, dying, dying.

And then, the spectre lifted. The struggle for breath ceased. Exquisite peace succeeded, peace without languor, peace full and wonderful. A sense of amazing spiritual and intellectual strength possessed him. Was he dreaming?

He found himself standing in the middle of the room. His first thought was to confirm the fact of his existence. He moved swiftly, and with feet that did not seem to touch the ground, to the cheval glass standing in the corner. He looked into the glass, but started back horror stricken! He *must* be dreaming,—or mad! He returned to the mirror, and looked again. He was mad! No, he was dreaming. "You are neither mad nor dreaming," whispered a Voice. "Yes, mad or dreaming," he answered, and stood looking in the silent glass.

He was looking at nothing!

There was no reflection of himself in that broad sheet of sullen glass. And yet it was not nothingness he saw there. The table with the whisky decanter and his pipe was imaged there; and a picture on the wall, and his arm-chair at the foot of the bed, and the dressing-table with the candle on it.

The candle! It was unlit, and yet the room was full of all-sufficing light. Again he cried within himself, "I am mad, or I am dreaming," and again a Voice answered him, "Neither mad nor dreaming." The Voice soothed him. Its message convinced him. But what spoke to him? Surely it was a dream, vivid beyond all other dreams, but still a dream. "No dream," answered the Voice, and he knew that it spoke truth.

He moved to the window. His hand was raised to draw aside the heavy blind,

when he realised that he could see through it, could see the wet grass under the moonlight, and the ring of beeches dripping with dew. It was night, unmistakable night, but night with the full effulgence of day.

While he stood there marvelling he suddenly became aware that there was some Being with him in the room. He remained passive, and this realisation became more and more distinct. It grew upon his consciousness as stars grow upon the eye when one looks long into the heavens. He knew that the presence was there, just as he knew that he himself was there. He could not see himself, he could not see the spirit, but he knew that both were there. And without the necessity of beholding himself to know that he was Hubert Low, so without seeing this presence he knew that it was no other than Paul Swainson.

He waited, all wonderment gone, all sense of terror vanished; he waited as a man waits with good news for the awakening of an invalid he loves, not feverishly, not impatiently as a child waits, but calmly and with an absorbing yearning.

Then gradually he became conscious of the spirit's thoughts. It did not amaze him that he knew these thoughts. His own needed no physical utterance to make themselves known to him, and as he knew his thoughts so he knew the thoughts of this ghostly visitant. It did not even seem to him non-natural that this should be so.

"You are Paul Swainson?" He knew that his tongue made no sound.

"I am Paul Swainson." There was no sound of speech between them. As mortals exchange words so they exchanged thoughts.

"Why are you here?"

"I wait, because my body was not dead when they laid it in the earth. There are other reasons: spirits who visit me tell me I shall know them when I reach another plane of existence. I am content to wait. I grow in knowledge."

"You were in a trance when they buried you?"

"As you are now."

"I?"

"Look."

He turned to the bed. His body lay there sleeping! "I am not dreaming?"

"No, not dreaming. Look again."

He looked on "the tired household of corporeal sense," lying in deep repose, the face inclining to the pillow, the hair dishevelled, one arm hanging over the side of the bed, the other stretched rigidly across the tossed and rumpled sheet. And as he looked, he saw the heart at peace, the lungs resting from their labour, and the brain idle as the needle of the telegraphist. It was a city of the dead. All the exquisite mechanism was visible, all the marvellous and bewildering appliances of physical existence; but the Ego that had inhabited that workshop and directed its intricate machinery was removed,—it stood outside regarding its body as a sculptor surveys the lifeless being he has hewn out of marble.

Then the spirit marvelled that he had ever so associated himself with the white recumbent figure on the bed as to lose his personal identity in the functions of the body and to doubt of his existence independent of that lifeless clay! Had not that heart done its work without his active supervision? Had not those lungs drawn their supplies from the air without his injunction? Had not the body's food been incorporated into that inanimate body without any conscious effort of his own? And had not that idle, dead brain caught and held ideas without any premeditation on the part of this consciousness that now stood above and surveyed it in its tiny cells?

"I am the spirit of this body?"

"Yes, the spirit. You see with spirit eyes, you hear with spirit ears, you speak with spirit lips. As you have lived on earth so is your spiritual comprehension. There is growth in our world as in the world you have left. And gradually the memory of your bondage in that narrow house of flesh will pass away; but gradually. All sense of space and time will fade."

"Already this place has no limitations. The walls of the room have ceased to exist; the walls of the house are gone too. I see what looks like infinity."

"Only a speck in infinity."

"I see beyond the edge of this island. I see the oceans as before I saw pools of water All the countries of the earth are before me, and all the people inhabiting these countries are visible: I see them, I hear them, I know some of their thoughts."

"And this earth is a grain of sand in comparison with infinity."

"You see more than the earth?"

"Ay, more Other worlds are visible to me, but they are worlds which I must pass through with another, who is still among men. I wait for her Once she was near me, after they had laid my body in the grave. She lived in this house, and her soul was so nearly free of animal domination that she felt my presence; but it terrified her; she clung too closely to the physical life, and she feared to face the reality of the spiritual. But I watch over her, though my dwelling is here, though the manifestation of my spirit moves only in these walls And I wait."

As they spoke, the spirit of Hubert Low became more and more conscious of his fellow-spirit. He was as sure of its existence as a man is sure of the existence of his child whose voice reaches him from another room. But with this growing and compelling realisation there came no visible manifestation of the spirit. He could see no form

The spirit bade him look on the awakened house. A servant was mounting the stairs to his room. She knocked, and there was no reply. Again she knocked, and again. Then she opened the door and entered. But when her eyes saw the figure on the bed, she started back and screamed. Other servants came to the room, the coachman among them. Hubert Low found himself diverted by the honest fellow's assumption of courage

"Never seen a dead body, Mary? There's nothing to be frightened of in any of them. Well, I'm blest! Who'd ha' thought the guv'nor was near his end! Dead? yes, he'll never talk to you or me any more. And as good a sportsman as I ever served! Well, it's a sermon—just a sermon, ain't it?" And he raised his head from the body's breast, with an almost professional expression of face.

The servants disappeared, and Dr. Sparkes arrived. "Dead? yes, quite dead," said the old man, and there were tears on the face of the white figure on the bed

The spirits were unconscious of time. The people faded from the room, and the undertaker arrived with the tools of his grim office. It all seemed to pass in the twinkling of an eye. But ere the work was completed the father of Hubert Low came into the room and leaned over his son's body. The old man's grey face was set hard, the lines in it were cut as with a chisel, and the eyes shone with suppressed grief. Dr. Sparkes, whiter and more broken, came into the room afterwards. But the iron-grey man was still bending over his son's body, and his hands were moving; all his senses were on the alert. Dr. Sparkes approached him in wonderment. They talked together: the iron-grey man sharply and quickly, the other bmkenly as one in amazement.

"Not dead!"

How strangely the words sounded to the spirit surveying his own inanimate clay!

"And I will save him!"

Ah! The peace was swept away from him. His powers were suddenly stripped off. All his senses contracted and shrank. Like a bird with maimed wing driven before a storm, he found himself plunging into darkness, helpless, and incapable of resistance. It was all darkness, tempestuous darkness. The winds of the world raved past him in tumultuous war, lifting him to giddy heights, plunging him into soundless depths, and sweeping him forward on their strenuous wings. And in his flight there was something that pursued, some vast and implacable enemy, viewless in the darkness, but master of the storm, and directing its battle.

Ah! He was clasped again in those tyrannical arms. The phantom had surrounded him, and was crushing him. His flight was arrested, the storm had ceased. In airless space he hung clasped by the invisible arms of this inexorable Power. He was alone with this gigantic force again, and yet there seemed to be another watching the struggle, some invisible habitant of air whose presence brought comfort to him in the strife. "Remember me!" said a voice, "Remember me!" and he ceased to struggle. A moment ago he had felt himself gigantic in stature and godlike in power, now, surely, he was no larger than a raindrop and powerless as a flower. He was as one grain of sand surrounded and enveloped by all the mountains of the earth, and the mountains were falling on him, crashing from their frozen, silent heights, and thundering upon his stricken form. He was in the midst of a universal cataclysm, the only conscious being in that uproarious upheaval. Alone, utterly alone! But dying, yes, thank God, dying. His reason had left him, his consciousness was fading. Slowly the clamorous sound of falling mountains was dying away, the darkness was no longer oppressive, his helplessness was now a joy and a deliverance. Some gentle-handed power steeped his wounded, shattered limbs in the calm waters of oblivion. He was passing from life to death, and death was sweeter than life, ah, sweeter than life—sweeter, far sweeter!

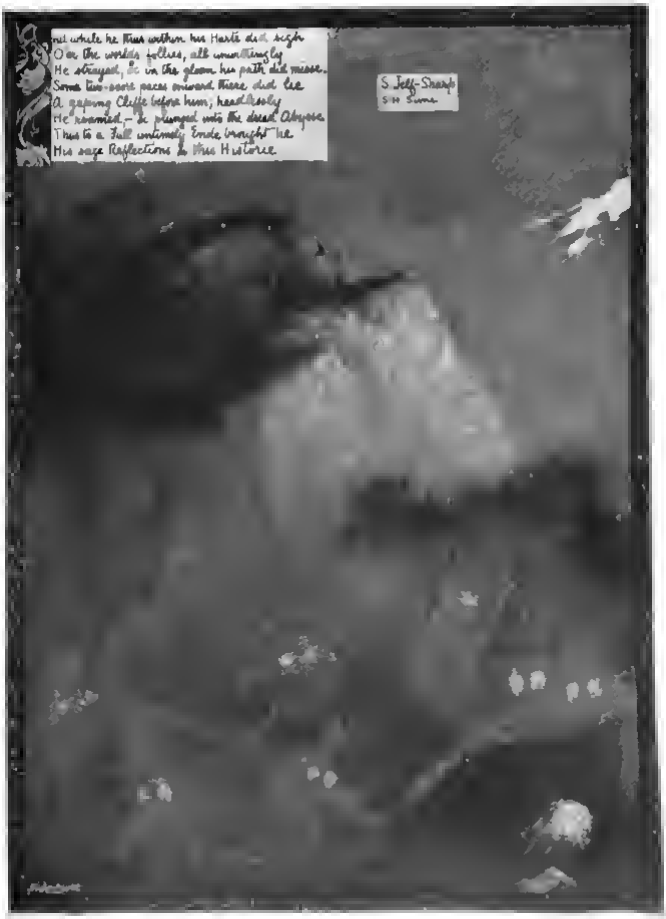
Then the slumbrous feeling passed. He found himself confined in a narrow space. He felt as a man would feel taken suddenly from the midst of the prairie and plunged immediately into a prison cell. He struggled to be free. The limitation frightened and terrified him. He fought against it, he pressed his hands against the sides of those narrow walls and forced them outwards. They yielded, slowly and noiselessly they gave before the pressure of his arms. He drew a deep breath and opened his eyes.

"I am so sleepy," he cried—"so frightfully sleepy."

The two doctors bending over his body exchanged looks of relief, and one of them said, "Thank God!"

E. H. Begbie.

pon a Snowmass one in yeares agonne
O. When Man walked abroad to take the ayre
And by a Mountain path did wend his Waye
And as he went, his glasses did fall upon
A Rout of Rabbits that did frolique there,
Which out a many upon at Hyde playe
But were, as they on the sward did passe,
Kept to Hyde Nether, that wound the mountain grene.
something then, the Wise man shook his head.
Reflecting thus:—How like these small beastes be
To Men in that they seldom seeke to leave
The nation Nether, altho the wide more spread
Before Hyde vaste! Yea, even so (quoth he)
Do men where a wider range, and cleave
unto Conventions narrow Bordens wrapped
No spacious Liberty confronts Hyde Skye!


But while he Thus within his Heart did sigh
O'er the wrongs follies, all unwittingly
He strayed, & in the gloom his path did misse.
Some two-score paces onward there did lie
A gaping Cleft before him; headlessly
He ventured,— & plunged into the direct Abysse
Then to a Full untimely Ende wrought his
His sage Reflections & Wise Historie
S. Jeff-Sharp
sin fecit

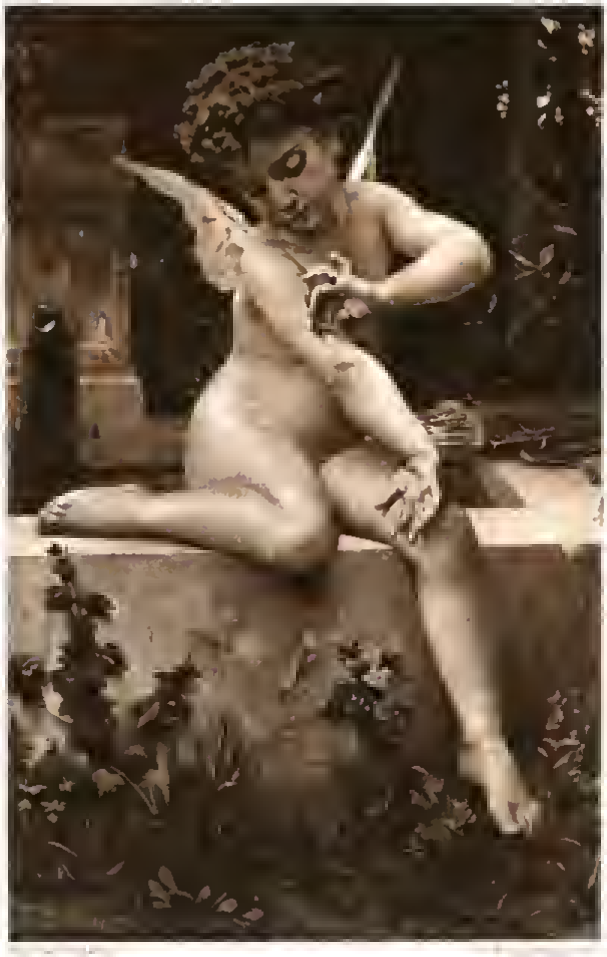
I BORE my soul to my Lady—
O, I bore it wearily!
And the moon shone wan upon me
As I bowèd on my knee;
And my soul shone wan in the light of the moon
As I cried in an agony—
"For love, O my Love, of the Lord of Love!
Lady, for love of me!
For thy pity's sake I pray thee take
My tarnished soul to thee,
And lay it to sleep on the motherly deep,
To sleep till Eternity,
By the side of thine own in the lilies, alone,
In the heart of thy Treasury—
By the side of thine own in the lilies, alone,
In the Lap of the Sapphire Sea."

She took it with fond, meek fingers—
O, she looked tenderly!
And she laid her lips upon it,
Lowly lips laid holily,
And bowing her head on her breast, she said,
"Till the Lord require it of me,
It shall be with mine own in the lilies, alone
They twain in my Treasury,
I will rock them to sleep on the cradling deep,
In the Lap of the Sapphire Sea,
I will lock the door for evermore,
I will give the Christ the key,
And never for ever shall aught them sever,
Till the Stroke of Eternity—
They shall be together for ever and ever,
Till the Stroke of Eternity."

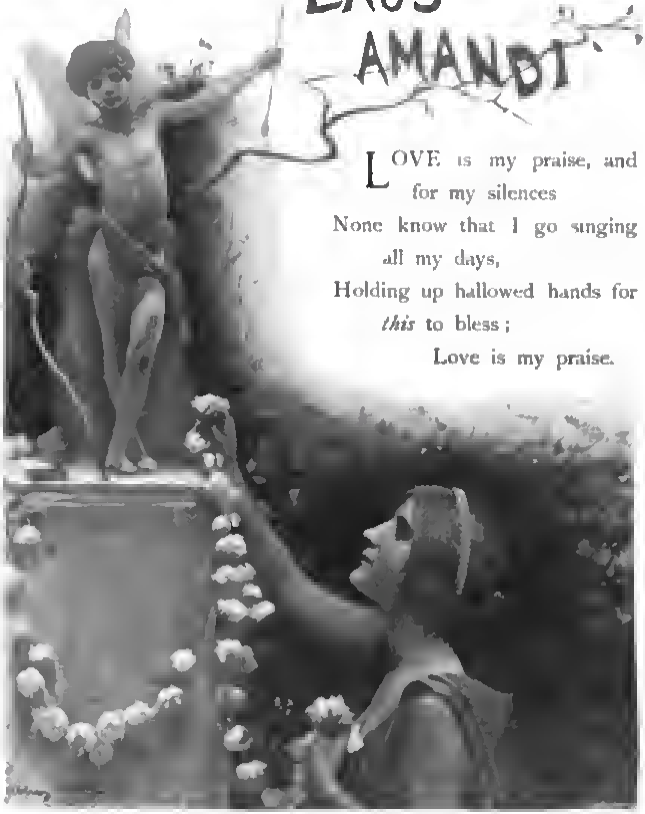
She opened the starry door
Of her Maiden Treasury,
And I looked, and lo! before me,
In the Far Infinity,
A lonely star that hung low o'er
A field of *fleurs-de-lys*,
Lying at rest on the slumbering breast
Of a swarthy sapphire sea,
And shining as bright 'mid the lilies as might
A star amid jewellery,
Her soul asleep on the slumbering deep,
Like a swan asleep on the sea,
As it lay like a swan upon sapphire it shone
So that I could not see,
As it lay like a swan 'mid the lilies it shone,
Till the lilies looked hoarily.

She hath washed my soul with tears—
O, it shineth fair to see!
She hath lipped it in the lilies,
She hath lain it on the sea,
She is walking over the waters, o'er
The lily floor to me.
"I have rocked it to sleep on the cradling deep,
To sleep till Eternity,
By the side of mine own in the lilies, alone
In the Lap of the Sapphire Sea;
It shall lie with mine own in the lilies, alone,
With mine own till Eternity . . .
I will keep it bright as a star in the night—
For love, O my Love, of Thee."
She will keep it white as her own so white—
All for her love of me.

ALFRED OLLIVANT



"Cupid's holiday"



LOVE is my praise, and for my silences
None know that I go singing all my days,
Holding up hallowed hands for *this* to bless;
Love is my praise.

One altar did my trembling reverence raise
Out of Life's ruins; through the crevices
My one love's incense rises sweet always.

Oh, not for me the wreaths and bridal dress!
And yet, *for that I looked upon your face*,
Up to the heaven all creeds and psalms confess
Love is my praise!

MARIE VAN VORST

A NIGHT ON THE MOOR

THE sun had set in a dull red glow, and twilight fell with odd swiftness. Although the sparse thorns of the moor, all inclining from west to east, in obedience to the prevalent winds, were scarce tinged with the bright hues of autumn, a few thin flakes of snow were falling gently. Lindsay Warmsworth, who had rented the shooting from Squire Greenleaf, buttoned his coat, and finally discharging his gun, prepared to return to the lodge. That afternoon, since his friends had passed on to other places, and a new party was not to arrive until the following day, he had been obliged to tramp alone. Barton, the old keeper, had complained mysteriously of rheumatism in his shaky knees, and after begging him on no account to be benighted, had tottered homeward when they reached the confines of the park. The bag which hung over Warmsworth's shoulder was heavy with slaughtered grouse; a brace of woodcock, too rare a prize to be carried in such plebeian company, bulged in his right-hand pocket.

This great stretch of table-land, in the very heart of the Peak Country, was covered chiefly with ling and sphagnum. Here and there, round beds of rushes, wet and blood-coloured, disclosed the existence of treacherous marsh. Warmsworth, after passing a Druids' Circle, found an ancient bridle-path of hollowed slabs, which he had never seen before, and surmising that it passed in the direction of his resting-place, he began to hurry, thankful to be relieved from the necessity of carefully picking his way over the sodden ground. As far as he could understand, he had more than three miles to cover before reaching comfortable shelter; but being young and hot-blooded, he felt no tremors, and, lifting a powerful voice in a popular hunting song, he shaped the rhythm to the muffled sound of his footsteps. After a while, however, so intense grew the blackness and so heavy the snowfall, that he stopped short in his elegy of "John Peel," and with a sudden uneasiness drew out his compass, struck a match, and strove to discover if he were on the right track. A gust blew out the light immediately, but not before he had seen that the needle had fallen from its pivot; without further delay he continued to proceed, trusting to a keen sense of locality, which he had never known to fail.

After he had proceeded for at least an hour, and not yet reached the sloping clough at whose lower end stood the Lodge, he found that he had left the path, and was straying knee-deep in heather, whose branches were so tough that no firing could have been done for years. The snow was still falling, and the wind rose in low soughs. He began, unwillingly, to realise that he was lost, and, in

spite of Barton's deprecations, in all probability must remain on the moor until daybreak. Fortunately, just as he had resigned hope of finding any shelter, his outstretched left hand touched a stout wooden door, and after a brief struggle with the latch he entered a shepherd's hut, mud walled and thatched with turves. On striking another match, he discovered, to his great relief, that the place was waterproof, and that, in readiness for the winter, a huge faggot of fir-boughs lay in a corner, beside a great stone, above which rose a narrow chimney. To set light to a few twigs was the work of a moment; soon a brave fire was crackling lustily. A bed of dried bracken was spread on trestled boards; he sat down, drew out his pipe, and thanked the gods for a harbour of refuge. The resinous sap of the fir-wood diffused a fragrant odour that overpowered the fumes of the tobacco, and the flames cast dancing shadows on the dark-brown walls.

Ere long the heat of the place made him drowsy; he lay full length on the bracken, and, with his face turned towards the glow, fell fast asleep. He was awakened very soon, however, by the distant barking of a dog, and in the belief that some one was searching for him, he sprang to his feet and threw open the door. Outside the blackness was denser than ever; the firelight struck against a barrier of mist. The downfall had ceased, there was no longer any moaning of the wind. Half convinced that the noise had existed only in his own fancy, he placed his fingers again on the latch, when it was repeated, and peering in the direction whence it came, he saw, near by, the greenish light of a lantern. In another moment a young woman glided forward and stood, like a gorgeous shadow, on the threshold. The lantern swung from one hand, the other held a gauzy handkerchief, slipped through the collar of a timid white fawn; in the background crouched a huge old mastiff, whose eyes gleamed sullenly.

The lady's beauty, coupled with the quaintness of her attire, numbed Warmsworth's faculty of speech; he did nought but gaze stupidly on the strange picture. Her skin was very fair, touched with a faint pink in the cheeks; her eyes were deep blue and lustrous, her mouth archly curved. On either temple hung a cluster of black curls, connected across the smooth forehead with a jewelled trellis work; above rose a turban of gold gauze, (one fringed end of which fell to her neck,) surmounted with the plumage of some bright bird. Her gown, of carmine velvet, was not of the present fashion; the bodice was tight to the waist and heart-shaped at the bosom, the skirt swelled over a great hoop. This was nearly covered with a long white satin-lined mantle of beetred with vast sleeves; a collar and cape of sable lay lightly on her polished shoulders, unclasped so that a brilliant necklace was visible. There were no signs of travel in her costume; her bronze sandals were not even damped with the snow.

"La!" she cried, in dismay, "I had hoped to find shepherd Nawe here, to beg him to shelter my poor fawn. Marlowe turned her out on the moor, hoping, perchance, she'd die before daybreak. He hates all gifts that others offer me. I took Lightfoot and went a seeking her. Not a long task: the wretch lay under my chamber window!"

Warmsworth was still tongue-tied, the stranger shrugged and pouted. "Lord, what an outlandish costume!" she cried. "Prythee, good gentleman, art come from the shores of Greenland?"

He flushed, and found his speech. "No, madam, but from Calton Lodge," he said. "I am belated here, after a day's shooting. I have kindled a fire to rest by till morning."

"A *monsieur*!" she exclaimed, with a merry laugh; "no Englishman spoke with such an accent. But you are wrong, sir, in meditating a night spent here.

My own house of Offerton lies not half a mile away, and Marlowe, my husband, shall play host at my bidding. So — no demur, I entreat — come with me now, we'll leave Crystalla, the fawn, in your stead, and you shall bring life to a deadly dull place."

"'La!' she cried in dismay, 'I had hoped to find shepherd News here!'"

There was something so fascinating in the beauty's aspect that Warmsworth had no thought of declining. The mode of her garments perplexed him somewhat; never before had he seen a woman gowned so strangely. Yet there was no doubt that what she wore became her vastly. In some odd way she reminded him of an eighteenth-century painting of a belle of the Georgian Court. A brief glance at her hands showed him that they were daintily kept and extremely small, she displayed a fine ring upon each finger.

"I shall be very grateful," he replied. "I had no knowledge of a house so near the Lodge."

"Why," she said, "if 'tis Calton Lodge you speak of, you are full seven miles from't! I am taking you to Offerton Hall in Barley Clough—surely you've heard of the place? My husband, Stephen Marlowe—the last of the Marlowes—compels me to live in this barren Peakland."

"Forgive me," said Warmsworth, "but I am almost a stranger here, I know nought of this country. This season I rented Squire Greenleaf's shooting for a whim——"

"Heavens!" interrupted the lady. "Will Greenleaf's shooting! And I saw him but yesterday, and he said not a word of't. But he was ever a sly, cunning lad! His eyes tell me that, when he seems to be looking at the wall, Lord! he's noting everything that passes! Now, sir, I beg of you, let us go on to Offerton; I'm warm by nature, but this night is enow to strike one dead."

The white fawn (it was evidently accustomed to the shelter of a roof) lay

before the hearth, Warmsworth closed the door, and the lady, who refused to relinquish the lantern, walked a few paces in front, with the dog at her side.

"I must tell you that Steve is a man of odd fancies," she observed. "As jealous a rogue as was e'er begotten, he cannot bear those whom he loves to give word or look to another! But you, an outlandish stranger, benighted, he won't fail to offer you a hearty welcome."

There was a shade of doubt in her voice; she paused, as if reflection told her that she had been better advised to leave Warmsworth in the shepherd's hut. She sighed lightly because of her fleeting cowardice, then hurried on again.

"To-night he had a whimsy for turning my Crystalla loose. I doted on her too much, said he, and 'twas because my lord the Earl of Newburgh bred her. If I had not unchained Lightfoot and donned my cloak and run out, the poor angel would have frozen stark. I'll send her back to my lord to-morrow, if I can find in my heart to part with her. Yet Steve's a good soul, though there's black blood in his veins. Sometimes, I protest, he makes me tremble like an aspen leaf. He was in one of his wildest humours an hour ago, but I ne'er show that I'm daunted, and I gave him word for word—told him nought should hinder me from having my own way. Yet, though I prattle on with other men, in my heart his roots twine everywhere."

Her fantastic excitement and tantalising confidences wrought Warmsworth to great curiosity; but he dared ask no questions. At a gateway in a lofty arch of limestone, she fitted her master-key in the lock.

"'Tis the nearest way," she said, "though there is no boundary betwixt the garden and the moor on the eastern side. Were it not night-time, and over-cold, we would loiter here and you should tell me of life in town. Ay me, Steve has not let me leave this prison for two dreary twelvemonths! None but country joskins to talk folly with; the overflow of my love to fall on silly creatures like Crystalla and old Lightfoot."

As much of the garden as the lantern-light discovered, showed leaden statuary, slender fountains, yews chipped in the shape of boars and foxes and weasels. Ere they had passed half-way up the broad path the valves of a great door swung inward and a man appeared on the topmost stone of a staircase that descended to a terrace. To Warmsworth's bewilderment, he was attired as quaintly as the lady, in black satin coat and knee-breeches, and vest of embroidered green. A white periwig covered his head, in peculiar contrast with the jetty curved eyebrows. His sparkling eyes were of a hue to match; the corners of his mouth were drawn upward, uncovering small white teeth. Despite the malevolence of his expression, it was impossible to deny that his beauty was equal to the lady's.

She caught Warmsworth's sleeve and drew him forward. "Steve," she said, in a voice that quavered perceptibly, "in my journey for the fawn's safety, I came across a wayfarer, poor gentleman, who had taken shelter in Nawe's hut, and knowing that you delight in showing hospitality to all, I brought him here."

Her husband lifted his forefinger to his brow, as if to smooth out a gathering frown, then giving Warmsworth a cordial welcome, led the way to the hearth of a dining-parlour.

"I am vastly wearied of the folk I know," he said, "and 'tis indeed a pleasure to see a stranger in this house. For my wife's sake' (the lady gave a little cry of surprise), "I live here and make the best of 't. This is her inheritance, remote from the world of gaiety; I warrant Sophia loves the seclusion."

"Bah!" she exclaimed. "I do not love it—I shall never love a gaol-house, although I may love my keeper."

She flung off her mantle and glided across the room to an opened spinet; still standing, she used her right hand to draw out a few chords, then sang the first words of "Phyllida flouts me":—

"Oh, what a plague is love! I cannot bear it,
She will inconstant prove, I greatly fear it"

Warmsworth, glancing at his host, saw in his countenance a look of agonising pain, that changed instantly into an agreeable smile. The wife left her spinet and went to an oaken buffet, that bore, amongst bright pewter-ware, a stone flask and a silver loving cup. She drew out the stopper of the former, filled the vessel to the brim, then drank lightly.

"Here's to a happy meeting!" she said. "Here's to a joyful break in our dulness!"

She passed it to Warmsworth, touching meaningly that part of the edge which her lips had pressed. Stephen Marlowe's back was turned for the nonce, and the young man, unaware that he faced a mirror, nodded and drank, ending with an audible kiss, at sound of which the husband swung round suddenly upon his heel. Sophia thereupon made a demure curtsey, her hands clasped over her bosom, where the velvet met the frilled muslin of her chemisette.

"Alack and well-a-day," she sang, "She loves me to gainsay."

Stephen strode forward and caught her by the wrist. "Damn you!" he muttered huskily, "You *have* met this man before!"

"And if I have, what then?" she responded. "Surely I met men before I met you. At the Court, indeed, I knew *gentlemen*, ere I was fool enough to listen to your prayers. I command you to release my hand! I have no liking for purple bracelets made by your iron fingers!"

"My God!" he groaned, as he thrust her roughly aside, "you go too far, Sophy—to speak thus in a stranger's presence!"

Then, without waiting for her reply, he averted his face and abruptly left the chamber.

She sighed wearily, motioned Warmsworth to rest by the fire, and putting down her rebellious hoop she sank into the recesses of a heavy, gilt-framed, brocade-coovered armchair.

"Alas!" she said, almost whimpering, "'tis very hard to live with such a housemate. Had I known that Marlowe 'ld use me thus, I'd have stopped my ears with wax—as Ulysses did when the Siren chanted. A belle—the most famous toast of three years agone—to be kept barred in a cage, to be slighted afront a foreigner! See, his violence hath already marked my poor skin; there's five scarlet spots growing darker every instant."

She held out her hand; Warmsworth knelt and drew it nearer the firelight. Curiously enough, the quaintness of their manners reflected itself upon him; he began unconsciously to mimic demeanour and speech.

"Prythee, mistress Sophia," he said, "do not blame me, though I be the cause——"

Her merry laugh rang out again: perhaps that was why the tapestry curtain of another doorway, opposite to that by which they had entered, fluttered convulsively.

"Not mistress!" she cried. "Lady Sophia—Sophy to my friends and to my jealous husband. A marquis's daughter, wedded to a commoner . . . Ah, I do not blame you, sir; I ask but a panacea—each stain to be kissed. A kiss is the best salve in the world."

"He averted his face and abruptly left the chamber"

A low moan came from behind the tremulous curtains as the young man's lips touched the warm satiny skin. Doubtless Lady Sophia heard it, for the light in her eyes danced very fantastically, and she stooped until her face was very near his own.

"Hist!" she whispered, "let you and I play a comedy, such as Mr Wycherley wrote ages ago. I'll do the talking—your part is but to smile and languish and say 'Ay,' every time I pause. Now for it,—the curtain rises."

Her voice rose, she began to speak in tones brimful of feigned tenderness and delight.

"La! Sir Michael, to think that to-night we should meet so unexpectedly, when to-morrow, by assignation at the Druids' Circle, which I described in my summons, you were to wait my coming, whilst Steve was a-hunting the fox. He never knew of your existence; by Gemini! he never shall know what passed between us. There's an infinitely keener joy in stolen kisses—such as you wot of in Nawe's hut."

"Ay," said Warmsworth—"ay."

"Dost remember at my aunt's ball—the Bath Assembly Rooms the place—after young Mr. Beckford had led me through the minuet, you fumed and fretted (foolish boy!) and swore that you would spit him on your rapier. There was budding down on your upper lip then, and your skin was fair as mine. And to appease you, dearest, I promised to wed you some day, but sure I was not in earnest. Why, heart o' me, I was scarce sixteen at the time, and you were but three months older! When your folk sent you on the Grand Tour, we both wept like bantlings!"

She linked her arm around his neck, hollowed her palm to support his chin, and turned his face upwards. A rebellious fever beated his veins, he would have given much for her words to have been sober truth.

"Why play comedy any longer?" he murmured, hoarsely.

"Nay, you'll spoil my pretty, mischievous plot," she whispered in return. "Be your old self, Sir Michael," she cried. "Steve hath no inkling of whom you are, or how we loved—and still love."

"Ay," he said.

"I vow," she continued, "that you're as goodly to look upon as you were eight years ago. Many and many a night have I awoke in my bed, thinking that no comelier man was ever created since the days of Adam. We were made for each other—there's conceit for you! . . . Can you say in earnest that I am still as beautiful as in those days when you called me your little wife, and we broke asunder a silver ring?"

"Lovelier," said Warmsworth, with an enthusiasm that was not pretended—"infinitely lovelier."

Her cheek was pressed against his, her breath stirred the tiny curls on his temples.

"Had I known that time would work no change in your affections," she said, "I'ld ne'er have hearkened to Steve's protestations. But he swore to kill himself if I said him nay—he followed me like a spaniel, battered at my door till in very hopelessness I let him enter. And you were flaunting abroad with your tutor, loving the maids of Italy and France and Allemagne, whilst I had nought of you save a broken bit of silver."

She drew hereby to her full height and stood apart, casting a mischievous look at the further doorway. Warmsworth rose from his knees and confronted her; his eyes bright as hers, and as vivid a colour in his cheeks.

Steve is far away," she said, "working off his fury in a flight over the moor. He has never learned—shall never learn—what is hidden in the trinket I keep warm against my heart" (her fingers began to toy with the laces of her bosom), "for I kept it sacred to you, and swore no other man should e'er open it."

Warmsworth no longer remembered his injunction to say nought but "ay." He moved nearer; she retreated a step.

"Let me see it!" he cried.

The coquette laughed for the last time, and thrust out her arms, as if to fend his touch. "Nay," she said, "of my own will I'll ne'er show it." She plucked

from her bodice a loop of sky-blue ribbon. "You shall not make me do what I would not."

He came nearer still, and clutching the ribbon strove to draw the locket from its nest. Of a sudden she grew white and faint, reeling back against her chair.

"The comedy is played," she faltered.

Marlowe strode forward, tearing the tapestry from its hooks. So fearful was he to behold that Warmsworth shrank aside, as if in grim earnest the man was possessed with a demon. Sophia strove to retain her composure, and grasping one of his clenched fists essayed to relax its tension.

"My dearest," she stammered, piteously, "'twas but a piece of acting. I ne'er saw the man before to-night, and I knew that you were present all the time. I saw the curtain shake; I heard you gasp and groan."

Then she quailed in silence before the madness she had evoked. Warmsworth laid his hand on the lappet of Marlowe's coat.

"The lady speaks the truth, man!" he cried.

But Marlowe, paying no heed to his words, pointed to the door by which they had entered, and his wife crept from the chamber, with him following stealthily in her wake. The door slammed, and Warmsworth heard the turning of a key. He beat upon the panels, but nobody came; he hastened to the other door, to find it barred with an invisible spring. Beyond the heavily-mullioned oriel window a faint ray of moonlight showed him two mist-cloaked figures—one in pursuit of the other—scurrying over the snow-covered garden. . . .

He began to pace restlessly to and fro, ever and anon striking the door and the floor, in the vain hope of summoning some servant. At last, wearied with over-excitement, he flung himself in a chair by the sinking fire, and fell into an uneasy slumber, from which, after curious dreams of mingled joy and horror, he was awakened by the creaking of rusty hinges.

His eyes were dull and heavy, some moments passed before he recognised old Barton, the keeper, who stood at his side. Instead of the panelled walls of Marlowe's dining-parlour, he saw piled clods, with chinks that admitted a dim daylight.

"How did I come here?" he inquired, in a voice that sounded peculiarly rasping.

"Lord bev' mercy, sir!" said the relieved gaffer, "yo've been lost on th' moor, on a neeght when no folk o' these parts 'ld dare to venture aat. Et's ten o'clock,—at dawn I tuk th' cob an' started a-seekin' yo'. Yo' be grey as death."

"Have you a flask?" said Warmsworth. "I feel cramped and sick."

He drank, and rose from the bracken. At the door stood a grey pony, which Barton helped him to mount. Neither spoke as they moved slowly through the min, until they came to some rough piles of stone, where Barton, who was a good Catholic, crossed himself devoutly.

"Theer's Offerton Owd Hall," he remarked in a low voice. "At least, theer et stood. Et's been i' ruins for more nor a hunnerd year—sin' Mr. Marlowe draaned hes lady i' th' marsh, through jealousy."

R. MURRAY GILCHRIST.

THE TOMB OF SARAH.

MY father was the head of a celebrated firm of church restorers and decorators about sixty years ago. He took a keen interest in his work, and made an especial study of any old legends or family histories that came under his observation. He was necessarily very well read and thoroughly well posted in all questions of folk-lore and mediæval legend. As he kept a careful record of every case he investigated, the manuscripts he left at his death have a special interest. From amongst them I have selected the following, as being a particularly weird and extraordinary experience. In presenting it to the public, I feel it is superfluous to apologise for its supernatural character.

MY FATHER'S DIARY.

1841.—*June 17th.* Received a commission from my old friend Peter Grant to enlarge and restore the chancel of his church at Hagarstone, in the wilds of the West Country.

July 5th. Went down to Hagarstone with my head man Somers. A very long and tiring journey.

July 7th. Got the work well started. The old church is one of special interest to the antiquarian, and I shall endeavour while restoring it to alter the existing arrangements as little as possible. One large tomb, however, must be moved bodily ten feet at least to the southward. Curiously enough, there is a somewhat forbidding inscription upon it in Latin, and I am sorry that this particular tomb should have to be moved. It stands amongst the graves of the Kenyons, an old family which has been extinct in these parts for centuries. The inscription on it runs thus:—

"SARAH.

"1630.

"FOR THE SAKE OF THE DEAD AND THE WELFARE OF THE LIVING, LET THIS SEPULTURE REMAIN UNTOUCHED AND ITS OCCUPANT UNDISTURBED TILL THE COMING OF CHRIST.

"IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST."

July 8th. Took counsel with Grant concerning the "Sarah Tomb" We are both very loth to disturb it, but the ground has sunk so beneath it, that the safety of the church is in danger; thus we have no choice However, the work shall be done as reverently as possible under our own direction

Grant says there is a legend in the neighbourhood that it is the tomb of the last of the Kenyons, the evil Countess Sarah, who was murdered in 1630 She lived quite alone in the old castle, whose ruins still stand three miles from here on the road to Bristol. Her reputation was an evil one even for those days. She was a witch or were-woman, the only companion of her solitude being a familiar in the shape of a huge Asiatic wolf This creature was reputed to seize upon children, or failing these, sheep and other small animals, and convey them to the castle, where the Countess used to suck their blood. It was popularly supposed that she could never be killed. This, however, proved a fallacy, since she was strangled one day by a mad peasant woman who had lost two children, she declaring that they had both been seized and carried off by the Countess's familiar This is a very interesting story, since it points to a local superstition very similar to that of the Vampire, existing in Slavonic and Hungarian Europe.

The tomb is built of black marble, surmounted by an enormous slab of the same material On the slab is a magnificent group of figures. A young and handsome woman reclines upon a couch, round her neck is a piece of rope, the end of which she holds in her hand. At her side is a gigantic dog with bared fangs and lolling tongue The face of the reclining figure is a cruel one, the corners of the mouth are curiously lifted, showing the sharp points of long canine or dog teeth. The whole group, though magnificently executed, leaves a most unpleasant sensation

If we move the tomb it will have to be done in two pieces, the covering slab first and then the tomb proper. We have decided to remove the covering slab to morrow.

July 9th.—6 p.m. A very strange day

By noon everything was ready for lifting off the covering stone, and after the men's dinner we started the jacks and pulleys. The slab lifted easily enough, though it fitted closely into its seat and was further secured by some sort of mortar or putty, which must have kept the interior perfectly air-tight.

None of us were prepared for the horrible rush of foul, mouldy air that escaped as the cover lifted clear of its seating. And the contents that gradually came into view were more startling still There lay the fully dressed body of a woman, wizened and shrunk and ghastly pale as if from starvation Round her neck was a loose cord, and, judging by the scars still visible, the story of death by strangulation was true enough.

The most horrible part, however, was the extraordinary freshness of the body. Except for the appearance of starvation, life might have been only just extinct The flesh was soft and white, the eyes were wide open and seemed to stare at us with a fearful understanding in them. The body itself lay on mould, without any pretence to coffin or shell.

For several moments we gazed with horrible curiosity, and then it became too much for my workmen, who implored us to replace the covering slab That, of course, we would not do, but I set the carpenters to work at once to make a temporary cover while we moved the tomb to its new position. This is a long job, and will take two or three days at least

July 9th—9 p.m. Just at sunset we were startled by the howling of, seemingly, every dog in the village. It lasted for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, and

then ceased as suddenly as it began. This, and a curious mist that has risen round the church, makes me feel rather anxious about the "Sarah Tomb." According to the best established traditions of the Vampire-haunted countries, the disturbance of dogs or wolves at sunset is supposed to indicate the presence of one of these fiends, and local fog is always considered to be a certain sign. The Vampire has the power of producing it for the purpose of concealing its movements near its hiding-place at any time.

I dare not mention or even hint my fears to the rector, for he is, not unnaturally perhaps, a rank disbeliever in many things that I know, from experience, are not only possible but even probable. I must work this out alone at first, and get his aid without his knowing in what direction he is helping me. I shall now watch till midnight at least.

10.15 p.m. As I feared and half expected. Just before ten there was another outburst of the hideous howling. It was commenced most distinctly by a particularly horrible and blood-curdling wail from the vicinity of the churchyard. The chorus lasted only a few minutes, however, and at the end of it I saw a large dark shape, like a huge dog, emerge from the fog and lope away at a rapid canter towards the open country. Assuming this to be what I fear, I shall see it return soon after midnight.

12.30 p.m. I was right. Almost as midnight struck, I saw the beast returning. It stopped at the spot where the fog seemed to commence, and lifting up its head, gave tongue to that particularly horrible long-drawn wail that I had noticed as preceding the outburst earlier in the evening.

To-morrow I shall tell the rector what I have seen; and if, as I expect, we hear of some neighbouring sheepfold having been raided, I shall get him to watch with me for this nocturnal marauder. I shall also examine the "Sarah Tomb" for something which he may notice without any previous hint from me.

July 10th. I found the workmen this morning much disturbed in mind about the howling of the dogs. "We doan't like it, zur," one of them said to me—"we doan't like it; there was zummat abroad last night that was unholy." They were still more uncomfortable when the news came round that a large dog had made a raid upon a flock of sheep, scattering them far and wide, and leaving three of them dead with torn throats in the field.

When I told the rector of what I had seen and what was being said in the village, he immediately decided that we must try and catch or at least identify the beast I had seen. "Of course," said he, "it is some dog lately imported into the neighbourhood, for I know of nothing about here nearly as large as the animal you describe, though its size may be due to the deceptive moonlight."

This afternoon I asked the rector, as a favour, to assist me in lifting the temporary cover that was on the tomb, giving as an excuse the reason that I wished to obtain a portion of the curious mortar with which it had been sealed. After a slight demur he consented, and we raised the lid. If the sight that met our eyes gave me a shock, at least it appalled Grant.

"Great God!" he exclaimed; "the woman is alive!"

And so it seemed for a moment. The corpse had lost much of its starved appearance, and looked hideously fresh and alive. It was still wrinkled and shrunken, but the lips were firm, and of the rich red hue of health. The eyes, if possible, were more appalling than ever, though fixed and staring. At one corner of the mouth I thought I noticed a slight dark-coloured froth, but I said nothing about it then.

'We doan't like it, zur, there was summat abroad last night that was unholy

"Take your piece of mortar, Harry," gasped Grant, "and let us shut the tomb again. God help me! Parson though I am, such dead faces frighten me!"

Nor was I sorry to hide that terrible face again, but I got my bit of mortar, and I have advanced a step towards the solution of the mystery.

This afternoon the tomb was moved several feet towards its new position, but it will be two or three days yet before we shall be ready to replace the slab.

10.15 p.m. Again the same howling at sunset, the same fog enveloping the church, and at 10 o'clock the same great beast slipping silently out into the open

country. I must get the rector's help and watch for its return. But precautions we must take, for if things are as I believe, we take our lives in our hands when we venture out into the night to waylay the—Vampire. Why not admit it at once? For that the beast I have seen is the Vampire of that evil thing in the tomb I can have no reasonable doubt.

Not yet come to its full strength, thank Heaven! after the starvation of nearly two centuries, for at present it can only maraud as wolf apparently. But, in a day or two, when full power returns, that dreadful woman in new strength and beauty will be able to leave her refuge. Then it would not be sheep merely that would satisfy her disgusting lust for blood, but victims that would yield their life-blood without a murmur to her caressing touch—victims that, dying of her foul embrace, themselves must become Vampires in their turn to prey on others.

Mercifully my knowledge gives me a safeguard; for that little piece of mortar that I rescued to-day from the tomb contains a portion of the Sacred Host, and who holds it, humbly and firmly believing in its virtue, may pass safely through such an ordeal as I intend to submit myself and the rector to to-night.

12.30 p.m. Our adventure is over for the present, and we are back safe.

After writing the last entry recorded above, I went off to find Grant and tell him that the marauder was out on the prowl again. "But, Grant," I said, "before we start out to-night, I must insist that you will let me prosecute this affair in my own way; you must promise to put yourself completely under my orders, without asking any questions as to the why and wherefore."

After a little demur, and some excusable chaff on his part at the serious view I was taking of what he called a "dog hunt," he gave me his promise. I then told him that we were to watch to-night and try and track the mysterious beast, but not to interfere with it in any way. I think, in spite of his jests, that I impressed him with the fact that there might be after all good reason for my precautions.

It was just after eleven when we stepped out into the still night.

Our first move was to try and penetrate the dense fog round the church, but there was something so chilly about it, and a faint smell so disgustingly rank and loathsome, that neither our nerves nor our stomachs were proof against it. Instead, we stationed ourselves in the dark shadow of a yew tree that commanded a good view of the wicket entrance to the churchyard.

At midnight the howling of the dogs began again, and in a few minutes we saw a large grey shape, with green eyes shining like lamps, shamble swiftly down the path towards us.

The rector started forward, but I laid a firm hand upon his arm and whispered a warning "Remember!" Then we both stood very still and watched as the great beast cantered swiftly by. It was real enough, for we could hear the clicking of its nails on the stone flags. It passed within a few yards of us, and seemed to be nothing more nor less than a great grey wolf, thin and gaunt, with bristling hair and dripping jaws. It stopped where the mist commenced, and turned round. It was truly a horrible sight, and made one's blood run cold. The eyes burnt like fires, the upper lip was snarling and raised, showing the great canine teeth, while round the mouth clung and dripped a dark-coloured froth.

It raised its head and gave tongue to its long wailing howl, which was answered from afar by the village dogs. After standing for a few moments, it turned and disappeared into the thickest part of the fog.

Very shortly afterwards the atmosphere began to clear, and within ten minutes the mist was all gone, the dogs in the village were silent, and the night seemed

to reassume its normal aspect. We examined the spot where the beast had been standing, and found, plainly enough upon the stone flags, dark spots of froth and saliva.

"Well, Rector," I said, "will you admit now, in view of the things you have seen to-day, in consideration of the legend, the woman in the tomb, the fog, the howling dogs, and, last but not least, the mysterious beast you have seen so close, that there is something not quite normal in it all? Will you put yourself unreservedly in my hands and help me, *whatever I may do*, to first make assurance doubly sure, and finally take the necessary steps for putting an end to this horror of the night?" I saw that the uncanny influence of the night was strong upon him, and wished to impress it as much as possible.

"Needs must," he replied, "when the Devil drives; and in the face of what I have seen, I must believe that some unholy forces are at work. Yet, how can they work in the sacred precincts of a church? Shall we not call rather upon Heaven to assist us in our need."

"Grant," I said solemnly, "that we must do, each in his own way. "God helps those who help themselves, and by His help and the light of my knowledge we must fight this battle for Him and the poor lost soul within."

We then returned to the rectory and to our rooms, though I have sat up to write this account while the scene is fresh in my mind.

July 11*th*. Found the workmen again very much disturbed in their minds, and full of a strange dog that had been seen during the night by several people, who had hunted it. Farmer Stotman, who had been watching his sheep (the same flock that had been raided the night before) had surprised it over a fresh carcase and tried to drive it off, but its size and fierceness so alarmed him that he had beaten a hasty retreat for a gun. When he returned the animal was gone, though he found that three more sheep from his flock were dead and torn.

The "Sarah Tomb" was moved to-day to its new position; but it was a long, heavy business, and there was not time to replace the covering slab. For this I was glad, as in the prosaic light of day the rector almost disbelieves the events of the night, and is prepared to think everything to have been magnified and distorted by our imagination.

As, however, I could not possibly proceed with my war of extermination against this foul thing without assistance, and as there is nobody else I can rely upon, I appealed to him for one more night—to convince him that it was no delusion, but a ghastly, horrible truth, which must be fought and conquered for our own sakes, as well as that of all those living in the neighbourhood.

"Put yourself in my hands, Rector," I said, "for to-night at least. Let us take those precautions which my study of the subject tells me are the right ones. To-night you and I must watch in the church, and I feel assured that to-morrow you will be as convinced as I am, and be equally prepared to take those awful steps which I know to be proper, and I must warn you that we shall find a more startling change in the body lying there than you noticed yesterday."

My words came true; for on raising the wooden cover once more, the rank stench of a slaughterhouse arose, making us feel positively sick. There lay the Vampire, but how changed from the starved and shrunken corpse we saw two days ago for the first time! The wrinkles had almost disappeared, the flesh was firm and full, the crimson lips grinned horribly over the long pointed teeth, and a distinct smear of blood had trickled down one corner of the mouth. We set

our teeth, however, and hardened our hearts Then we replaced the cover, and put what we had collected into a safe place in the vestry. Yet even now Grant could not believe that there was any real or pressing danger concealed in that awful tomb, as he raised strenuous objections to any apparent desecration of the body without further proof. This he shall have to-night God grant that I am not taking too much on myself! If there is any truth in old legends, it would be easy enough to destroy the Vampire now; but Grant will not have it.

I hope for the best of this night's work, but the danger in waiting is very great.

6 p.m I have prepared everything: the sharp knives, the pointed stake, fresh garlic, and the wild dog-roses All these I have taken and concealed in the vestry, where we can get at them when our solemn vigil commences

If either or both of us die with our fearful task undone, let those reading my record see that this is done I lay it upon them as a solemn obligation. "That the Vampire be pierced through the heart with the stake, then let the Burial Service be read over the poor clay at last released from its doom. Thus shall the Vampire cease to be, and a lost soul rest."

July 12th. All is over. After the most terrible night of watching and horror, one Vampire at least will trouble the world no more But how thankful should we be to a merciful Providence that that awful tomb was not disturbed by any one not having the knowledge necessary to deal with its dreadful occupant! I write this with no feelings of self-complacency, but simply with a great gratitude for the years of study I have been able to devote to this special subject.

And now to my tale.

Just before sunset last night, the rector and I locked ourselves into the church, and took up our position in the pulpit. It was one of those pulpits, to be found in some churches, which is entered from the vestry, the preacher appearing at a good height through an arched opening in the wall. This gave us a sense of security (which we felt we needed), a good view of the interior, and direct access to the implements which I had concealed in the vestry

The sun set and the twilight gradually deepened and faded There was, so far, no sign of the usual fog, nor any howling of the dogs At nine o'clock the moon rose and her pale light gradually flooded the aisles, and still no sign of any kind from the "Sarah Tomb" The rector had asked me several times what he might expect, but I was determined that no words or thought of mine should influence him, and that he should be convinced by his own senses alone.

By half past ten we were both getting very tired, and I began to think that perhaps after all we should see nothing that night However, soon after eleven we observed a light mist rising from the "Sarah Tomb." It seemed to scintillate and sparkle as it rose, and curled in a sort of pillar or spiral

I said nothing, but I heard the rector give a sort of gasp as he clutched my arm feverishly "Great Heaven!" he whispered "it is taking shape"

And true enough, in a very few moments we saw standing erect by the tomb the ghastly figure of the Countess Sarah!

She looked thin and haggard still, and her face was deadly white; but the crimson lips looked like a hideous gash in the pale cheeks, and her eyes glared like red coals in the gloom of the church.

It was a fearful thing to watch as she stepped unsteadily down the aisle, staggering a little as if from weakness and exhaustion This was perhaps, natural,

as her body must have suffered much physically from her long incarceration, in spite of the unholy forces which kept it fresh and well.

We watched her to the door, and wondered what would happen; but it appeared to present no difficulty, for she melted through it and disappeared.

"Now, Grant," I said, "do you believe?"

"Yes," he replied, "I must. Everything is in your hands, and I will obey your commands to the letter, if you can only instruct me how to rid my poor people of this unnameable terror."

"By God's help I will," said I; "but you shall be yet more convinced first, for we have a terrible work to do, and much to answer for in the future, before we leave the church again this morning. And now to work, for in its present weak state the Vampire will not wander far, but may return at any time, and must not find us unprepared."

We stepped down from the pulpit, and taking dog-roses and garlic from the vestry, proceeded to the tomb. I arrived first, and throwing off the wooden cover, cried, "Look! it is empty!" There was nothing there! Nothing except the impress of the body in the loose damp mould!

I took the flowers and laid them in a circle round the tomb, for legend teaches us that Vampires will not pass over these particular blossoms if they can avoid it.

Then, eight or ten feet away, I made a circle on the stone pavement, large enough for the rector and myself to stand in, and within the circle I placed the implements that I had brought into the church with me.

"Now," I said, "from this circle, which nothing unholy can step across, you shall see the Vampire face to face, and see her afraid to cross that other circle of garlic and dog-roses to regain her unholy refuge. But on no account step beyond the holy place you stand in, for the Vampire has a fearful strength not her own, and, like a snake, can draw her victim willingly to his own destruction."

Now, so far my work was done, and calling the rector, we stepped into the Holy Circle to await the Vampire's return.

Nor was this long delayed. Presently a damp, cold odour seemed to pervade the church, which made our hair bristle and flesh to creep. And then, down the aisle with noiseless feet came That which we watched for.

I heard the rector mutter a prayer, and I held him tightly by the arm, for he was shivering violently.

Long before we could distinguish the features, we saw the glowing eyes and the crimson sensual mouth. She went straight to her tomb, but stopped short when she encountered my flowers. She walked right round the tomb seeking a place to enter, and as she walked she saw us. A spasm of diabolical hate and fury passed over her face; but it quickly vanished, and a smile of love, more devilish still, took its place. She stretched out her arms towards us. Then we saw that round her mouth gathered a bloody froth, and from under her lips long pointed teeth gleamed and champed.

She spoke: a soft soothing voice, a voice that carried a spell with it, and affected us both strangely, particularly the rector. I wished to test as far as possible, without endangering our lives, the Vampire's power.

Her voice had a soporific effect, which I resisted easily enough, but which seemed to throw the rector into a sort of trance. More than this: it seemed to compel him to her in spite of his efforts to resist.

"Come!" she said,—"come! I give sleep and peace—sleep and peace—sleep and peace."

"She stretched out her hands towards us"

She advanced a little towards us, but not far, for I noted that the Sacred Circle seemed to keep her back like an iron hand

My companion seemed to become demoralised and spellbound. He tried to step forward, and finding me detain him whispered,—' Harry, let go! I must go! She is calling me! I must! I must! Oh, help me! help me!" And he began to struggle.

It was time to finish.

"Grant!" I cried, in a loud, firm voice, "in the name of all that you hold sacred, have done and play the man!" He shuddered violently, and gasped "Where am I?" Then he remembered, and clung to me convulsively for a moment.

At this a look of damnable hate changed the smiling face before us, and with a sort of shriek she staggered back.

"Back!" I cried. "back to your unholy tomb! No longer shall you molest the suffering world! Your end is near."

It was fear that now showed itself in her beautiful face (for it was beautiful in spite of its horror), as she shrank back, back and over the circlet of flowers, shivering as she did so. At last, with a low mournful cry, she appeared to melt back again into her tomb.

As she did so the first gleams of the rising sun lit up the world, and I knew all danger was over for the day.

Taking Grant by the arm, I drew him with me out of the circle and led him to the tomb. There lay the Vampire once more, still in her living death as we had a moment before seen her in her devilish life. But in the eyes remained that awful expression of hate, and cringing, appalling fear.

Grant was pulling himself together.

"Now," I said, "will you dare the last terrible act, and rid the world for ever of this horror?"

"By God!" he said solemnly, "I will.—Tell me what to do."

"Help me to lift her out of her tomb. She can harm us no more," I replied.

With averted faces we set to our terrible task, and laid her out upon the flags.

"Now," I said, "read the Burial Service over the poor body, and then let us give it its release from this living hell that holds it."

Reverently the rector read the beautiful words, and reverently I made the necessary responses. When it was over I took the stake, and, without giving myself time to think, plunged it with all my strength through the heart.

As though really alive, the body for a moment writhed and kicked convulsively, and an awful heart-rending shriek woke the silent church; then all was still.

Then we lifted the poor body back; and, thank God! the consolation that legend tells is never denied to those who have to do such awful work as ours came at last. Over the face stole a great and solemn peace, the lips lost their crimson hue, the prominent sharp teeth sank back into the mouth, and for a moment we saw before us the calm, pale face of a most beautiful woman, who smiled as she slept. A few minutes more, and she faded away to dust before our eyes as we watched. We set to work and cleaned up every trace of our work, and then departed for the rectory. Most thankful were we to step out of the church, with its horrible associations, into the rosy warmth of the summer morning.

With the above end the notes in my father's diary, though a few days later this further entry occurs:—

July 15th. Since the 12th everything has been quiet and as usual. We replaced and sealed up the "Sarah Tomb" this morning. The workmen were surprised to find the body had disappeared, but took it to be the natural result of exposing it to the air.

One odd thing came to my ears to-day. It appears that the child of one of the villagers strayed from home the night of the 11th inst., and was found asleep in a coppice near the church, very pale and quite exhausted. There were two small marks on her throat, which have since disappeared.

What does this mean? I have, however, kept it to myself, as, now that the Vampire is no more, no further danger either to that child or any other is to be apprehended. It is only those who die of the Vampire's embrace that become Vampires at death in their turn.

F. G. Loring, *Lieut. R.N.*

"WHAT happened to Nathan Bone," began Castlebridge, in his peculiarly deliberate manner, as we were sitting round the hearth in the Banqueting Chamber at Bathersberry Hall one night, "was told me by somebody who knew him as well as anybody did; but as he cannot correctly be said to have been known at all, this, perhaps, is not saying much. Bone was an antiquarian, and a learned man, it is believed. No one knew where he came from, no one knew who he really was. No doubt he was a little mad. His ways were not the ways of other men, and his peculiarities were too pronounced to be merely such. He never spoke to any one, with the exception of a niece of his, who lived with him No matter where he was, no matter what happened, he would never exchange a single word with anybody but this niece—not even with his housekeeper, who was rather good-looking, and who secretly doted on him. Daisy—that was his niece's name—was a young girl of twenty-three, exceedingly pretty, and naturally had a lover. He was tolerably well-to-do, 'tis said, and was dying to marry her But the antiquarian would not hear of it. He swore that she should never marry, with his consent, as long as he lived. And the worst of it was, he was so remarkably hale and hearty that he promised to live another forty years, at the very least. The lover, whose name was Ralph Thompson, was a fellow of some spirit, and, consequently, used to press the girl to run off with him Daisy, however, persisted in saying that she would never marry him, save with her uncle's consent, even if she had to wait fifty years; and so, what with one thing and another, you can easily imagine the fix that they were in.

"Thompson, of course, had interviews with the antiquarian: told him how he loved his niece, how he wished to marry her, and how happy he would make them if he would only give in. But it was no use whatever. In the first place, Nathan Bone never used to answer a word, and in the second place, he never used to listen. Of course Thompson was not allowed to enter the house; and if by any chance the two met anywhere Bone would scowl at him, and wave him aside as he would an importunate beggar.

"But sometimes, when he was out hunting up old fossils, or purchasing musty old curios, his niece would accompany her lover to his house, where she was always most favourably received by his parents, and where they no doubt made up for a little of their misfortune, as was only natural. How long this state of things would have lasted nobody can tell. How long it did last almost everybody knows.

"On a Christmas Eve, Bone was always in a bad humour, and on the Christmas Eve that this affair happened he was more than usually so. He had been up to London for two days, and had returned by the coach, which was naturally crowded, and Bone hated a crowd. What was more, the people were all talking about the holidays, and the capital times before them, wishing one another a happy Christmas, and telling each other all sorts of uninteresting little things about themselves, as people will do at this time of the year; and one of the inside passengers was taking home a turkey, and as it was hanging up beside the driver's seat, he was particularly anxious about it, and kept getting out to examine it every time the coach stopped. Then there was a man sitting next to him who kept making funny remarks, at which everybody laughed very much. All these little things annoyed Bone, who maintained a contemptuous silence the whole way. And then, as if this was not already enough, he found, when he got home, that his niece had decorated the rooms with holly and evergreens, and made it look almost cheerful.

"This naturally upset him still more, for he had a great antipathy to everything cheerful; and, last of all, the waits came and played, and sang Christmas carols in front of the house until he drove them away by emptying cold water over them.

"Then, in a thoroughly bad humour, he went upstairs to the room in which he kept his curios. It was now a quarter to twelve. Daisy happened to glance at the clock, and noticed the time. It was not a large room, but it was very old-fashioned, and was stocked with the most extraordinary things—fossils, shells, pieces of old armour, bones of prehistoric animals and birds, green snakes coiled up in bottles, skulls of criminals, coins, weapons, pieces of pottery, and the fossil of a cat. In fact, one might have taken it for a curiosity shop. But Bone was the only one who ever entered it, so that that made no difference. He used to spend most of his time here, though what he did is still a mystery. Some said that he was something of a magician; others that he had great hoards of money hidden away somewhere in this room, and that he used to come here at night to take it out and gloat over it. But it is no use repeating all the things that he was said to be. He had brought a long, narrow box with him from town, which he had himself carried up to this room. What was in it, Daisy and the servants could not imagine. And no doubt you will think it strange when I tell you that it contained a skeleton. What he wanted it for, goodness only knows. Already there was one grinning thing in the room. Anyhow, the fact remains that he bought another, and I believe, bought it because of the fearful grin that it had.

"When he had locked the door, he began to open the box; and he soon discovered that the jolting of the coach had caused one of the skeleton's legs to come unfastened. It was not broken; it had merely become detached at the joint. He picked the skeleton up in his arms, carried it across the room, and stood it up by means of an appliance which fitted round the thing's neck. This done, he stepped back and looked at it. He had forgotten to light the candles, and the only light in the room came from the fire. When he had surveyed the thing long enough, he went to the hearth, took up the poker, and began to stir the logs, and he was still bending down, with his back to the skeleton,

when twelve o'clock sounded. No sooner had it done so than a hollow voice exclaimed:

"'Now then, there! Look sharp with that fire.'

"Bone was not a man to be easily startled But this voice, on account of its unearthly sound, fairly made him jump He dropped the poker, and faced round. There was nobody to be seen. He was alone in the room. Not a sound was to be heard.

"'Come along! come along!' the voice went on

"And if you will believe me," said Castlebridge, looking round upon us very seriously, "it was that skeleton speaking. It was, indeed. Bone began to tremble. He stared hard at the thing, and the thing stared back at him out of its eyeless sockets. The firelight flickered upon its head. Where its eyes had once been were two deep shadowy cavities. Its grinning face looked frightful.

"'Do you hear?' it cried, beginning to move a little.

"'What's the matter?' said Bone, stepping back a few paces.

"'Matter!' said the skeleton, indignantly,—'why, a good deal. Where's my other leg?'

"'In the box,' replied Bone

"'Oh, indeed!' said the skeleton, ironically. 'In the box, is it! And what's it doing there?'

"'I haven't had time to put it on yet,' said Bone, very much startled; for it was the first time in his life that he had ever talked with a skeleton.

"'And what business have you ever to have had it off, I should like to know?'

"'I didn't take it off,' Bone replied. 'It came off'

"'Came off!' repeated the skeleton, indignantly. 'Odds graves and gibbets! then bring it here, and put it on again; and undo this cranked thing at the back of my neck!'

"'Strange!' muttered Bone—'strange!'

"Nevertheless, he brought the skeleton's other leg from the box, and fastened it on, keeping his eye on the thing the while to see that it did not do him any mischief; and then he unscrewed the fastening which held it to the wall.

"'That's it,' said the skeleton, moving its head from side to side. 'Now help me to that chair by the fire. Stay! First of all, have a look at my joints.'

"Bone lit a candle, and did as he was requested. 'This left knee's a bit shaky,' he said.

"'I'm shaky all over, it strikes me!' said the skeleton

"'I'll just put a fresh bit of wire round this articulation; then I think you'll do,' said Bone. 'You've got a bit chipped off the top of your tibia. That's what makes it feel so loose. I shouldn't bend too much, if I were you,' he added, as the skeleton stooped to look at its legs. 'Your back isn't very first-rate.'

"'What's the matter with it?' asked the skeleton, testily.

"'Well, it's beginning to crumble a little in places,' said Bone. 'You're a bone short, too, in the dorsal region, I see'

"'Ah!' said the skeleton, nervously,—'ah! I hope this room is fairly dry.'

"'I hope so too,' said Bone

"'I don't think that journey did me any good,' the skeleton observed thoughtfully.

"'I don't think it did,' said Bone. 'Just hold on to something a minute, will you, while I put this knee to rights. That's it. Now let's see how you work.'

"'Be careful!' said the skeleton, as Bone began to move the lower part of the leg backwards and forwards.

"'First have a look at my joints.' Bone lit a candle, and did as he was requested

"'It's all right,' replied Bone. 'I've got hold of you. Now then; see if you can walk.'

"The skeleton took a couple of steps, then stopped.

"'This right hip-joint works very stiffly,' it said.

"'I'll look it over in a minute,' said Bone. 'It's the head of the trochanter, I'm afraid. It's a bit worn, I fancy. You sit down here and keep quiet, and don't you lean back more than you can help.'

"'I won't,' said the skeleton. 'Odds gallows and graves! how I do creak, to be sure!'

"And then down it sat in the chair, and Bone unfastened its right leg and took it off and examined it. In order to do this properly he was obliged to light the other candles; and no sooner had he done so than he was startled to hear a second voice, which was even more hollow and more unearthly than the first.

"'What an extraordinary thing!' it said, gravely.

"'The devil! the devil!' exclaimed the antiquarian, starting.

"'Pardon me,' said the second skeleton, slowly, for upon my word, it was that one talking now.

"'I must be crazy,' muttered Bone to himself; 'I must be crazy.'

"'I was about to observe,' the second skeleton went on, 'that I am surprised to meet an old friend here. . . . Who'd expect to see Adam Goodman after all these years?'

"Now, when this name was mentioned, the first skeleton gave a bit of a start, and turned half round in its chair. In doing so, one of its arms dropped off.

"'Who mentioned Adam Goodman's name?' it said, looking as surprised as it is possible for a skeleton to look.

"'I did,' replied the second skeleton. And then, I am told, without the least assistance it stepped down from its box and walked over to the hearth, and stood before the other one.

"'*Will Dragge, the hangman*!' exclaimed the first skeleton, looking very much taken aback.

"'The same,' replied the other.

"'Why, it gives me quite a turn to see you again!' gasped the first skeleton, shaking a little.

"'I daresay it does.'

"And the second skeleton sat down in the chair opposite, making a gruesome creaking noise as it did so, that was horrible to listen to. Bone did not speak a word. He sat down on a stool between the two, and there he stopped till the end.

"'I was wishing I could come across you somewhere or other,' the second skeleton observed, after a short pause. 'I've got a secret to tell you.'

"'What's that?' said the other.

"'It's about that little affair you were hanged for,' said the second skeleton, very slowly.

"'I didn't murder him!' said the first skeleton.

"'No. But you were hanged for it. . . . And I hanged you.'

"'So you did, so you did!' said the first skeleton. 'Still, I didn't murder him.'

"There was a pause. Then the second skeleton said:

"'I know it.'

"'Eh?'

"'I know it.'

"'How do you know it?'

"The second skeleton stared at the other for a full minute, its ghastly grin quite terrifying old Bone. Then it said. 'Because I did'

"'You murdered him!'

"'Ay.'

"There was another pause.

"'Well, that is odd!' said the first skeleton, at last.

"'So I thought when I was arranging your drop. I gave you a good drop, I remember—a very good drop.'

"'So you did, so you did! . . . And to think we should be sitting here now, talking it over!'

"'Ah! It's of no consequence now, of course. But it's pleasant to talk of old times again. And I feel a deal easier now that I've told you. It used to worry me at times, especially after I came into my money, and took a house there on the Dover road.'

"'Very odd it was, to be sure!' said the second skeleton. 'I wonder where he is now. I've kept a good look out for him, but I haven't come across him yet. I rather fancy he's scattered about a bit—a leg here and a leg there, so to speak.'

"'Perhaps so. I shouldn't wonder at it at all. . . . But what the thunder did you kill him for? He seemed as fine a young gentleman as breathed, if I remember rightly—though, to be sure, he was a little haughty in his ways.'

"'A little too haughty, Adam, to please me—just a little too haughty, Adam. And when he called me a vile knave, as he strode out of your inn, I disliked it. It displeased me. He had cursed you for a swindling varlet, if you remember, because you had tried to palm off some of your cheap wine on him—I never could stand that cheap wine of yours myself, Adam—and you answered pretty hotly, as we all of us heard. So when I followed him out, after seeing you leave the premises, and knowing you would be away a full hour, I knew, too, well enough, that when he was found there would be some that would call to mind your words. And so they did . . . He had some spirit, I must allow. He was little more than a boy, too, and—would you believe it?—was going off to join his

bride. Damme! the young rascal had made a clandestine marriage, and the girl was expecting him that night at Reading' . . . He passed up the road towards the old turnpike. I rather fancy he must have mistaken his way. What should he want up there? . . . However, that didn't matter to me. Only I was a bit afraid that he would turn and come back again, which, of course, would have made it devilish awkward. However, he didn't; he kept straight on; and when he had passed the old bridge—you know where I mean, next to the pond there—I just stepped up to him, and touched him on the shoulder. 'Egad' but you should have seen him start. You see, there was snow on the ground, and he hadn't heard me coming behind him'

"The skeleton paused, its jaws opened with a clicking noise and a kind of hollow laughter filled the room"

"The skeleton paused, its jaws opened with a clicking noise, and a kind of hollow laughter filled the room.

"'You should just have heard him when I told him to stand and defend himself,' it continued. 'He said he should never recover from having been under the same roof with me, and swore that I made the air so unwholesome that he felt positively faint. As for fighting with me, he declared that he would rather die where he stood, in spite of his appointment, and said that perhaps, after having exchanged words with me, it would be the best thing that he could do . . . He was a little too haughty, Adam, to please me, just a little too haughty, Adam. And so . . . But what do you think his last words to me were, as he lay there at the side of the road? He must have rolled over into the ditch after I left him. I didn't put him there, although you found him in it. Damme' what do you think he said?'

"'Crank it!' I don't know,' said the first skeleton.

"'I'll tell you,' began the other in a horrible whisper; then it stopped suddenly. 'First of all,' it said uneasily, 'Old Bone must go outside. I won't tell Old Bone'

"'Bone,' said the first skeleton, 'leave the room.'

"The antiquarian got up, unlocked the door, and passed outside, closing the door behind him. He stopped and listened, of course, but not a word, not one single word, did he hear.

"While he was standing there, with his ear to the keyhole, it so happened that his niece came by. Knowing that there could be nobody in the room, she was naturally astonished to see him listening like that. But the antiquarian took no notice of her.

"'Bone, said the first skeleton, 'leave the room' The antiquarian got up, unlocked the door, and passed outside"

"'Whatever are you doing there, uncle?' she exclaimed.

"Old Bone raised a finger. 'Hush!' he whispered, excitedly. 'Not a word!'

"'What is the matter?" asked the girl, still more surprised.

"'Not a word!' whispered Old Bone.

"Daisy at once saw that a great change had come over him, and I need hardly say that she came to the conclusion that he was at last quite mad. She stopped with him, however, until eventually, not hearing any sound, he grew too impatient to wait any longer, and opened the door. They entered the room together, and then, if you will believe me, they saw something that made Bone stagger."

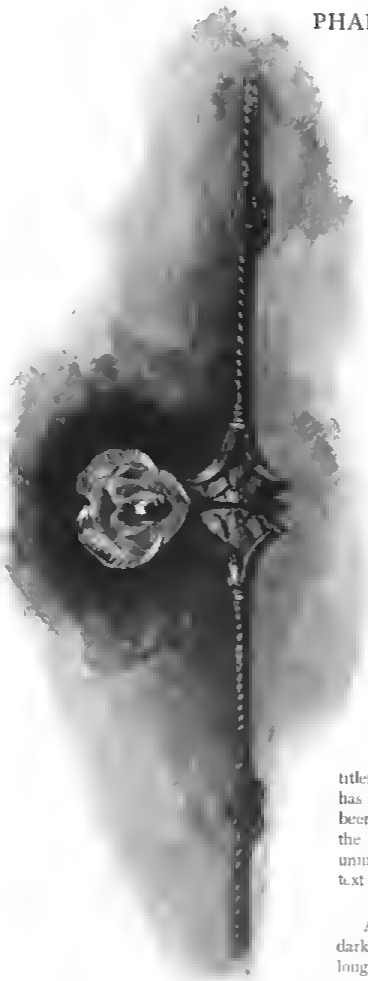
Castlebridge paused, and glanced at the face of each of his listeners.

"Each of those skeletons," he said, very slowly, "was back in its proper place, and the only thing that was left to prove that he had not dreamed it all was the first skeleton's arm, which had dropped on to the floor, and still lay there.

"What passed between the antiquarian and his niece is not known. That he never said a word to her about what he had seen is certain. No doubt he knew

that she would not believe it. But the strange thing is the change that it wrought in him. The very next day he packed his skeletons off to London. He sent for Ralph Thompson, told him that he would have to marry his niece at once, and to only one man did he ever tell what he had seen and heard that night. That man was the parson (who told it to me), and he did not believe a word of it. What is more, Bone married his housekeeper, and became as jolly a fellow as you would wish to meet; took to hunting, gave parties, went to all the dances round about, and, in short, became a thoroughly popular fellow; and everybody said," concluded Castlebridge, "that now that he was mad they liked him a great deal better than when he was sane."

ANTHONY KIRBY GILL



PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

AT Patmos, in the library of the Monastery of St. John the Divine, a monk showed me a Greek twelfth-century manuscript which having partly read, he declared contained an Egyptian narrative of unusual import The text appeared clear, albeit to me, of course, unintelligible, and was only defaced at the seams where the vellum had been folded. He translated into Italian the endorsement, which declared it to be the work of Eupithes, the son of Phidon, copied by him from a parchment duplicated by Periander, a scribe of the Alexandrian Library. This collection having been destroyed by Amrou, A.D 651, the writing of Periander was prior to that date As the Monastery does not part with its manuscripts, I proposed to the monk to sell me a transcription of the original, which he consented to make. When this reached me, some weeks later, I sent it to a classical authority, by whom it was rendered into the following English. The repetition of lengthy titles, inevitable to Egyptian writings, has been omitted, and it has not been thought necessary to confuse the reader with brackets indicating unimportant lacunæ in the original text

The Manuscript.

A Beacon secretly kindled in darkness to smoulder, it may be, long, yet to speak at the last as men signal one to another with

watchfires. It shall tell of the love of Amon-Ra, the Sun-god, of fearless footsteps, and few will doubt the written word, seeing that for a token Amon-Ra lays amorously upon the river the perpetual signet of his reflected brilliance.

The priests of Maat, which is Truth, and of Wert-Hekaw, the lion-hearted, stood before Pharaoh saying, "Lord of the Western Land, the wise man, when he goes upon a journey, loads his asses with sacks: likewise will the King make ready his children for the journey of life, whether they be of the few that climb the shining hills, or of the many that are content with the nearest brookside, giving them the staff of discretion and the scrip of knowledge to be their light in darkness." Therefore governors were set about Pharaoh's children to teach them to interweave the lotus with the laurel and the rose. And Ithobaal, a Phœnician, a beautiful man, filled with the lore of the Chaldeans, one that had tasted the things that make life worth having, was appointed fan bearer and reader to Amenteh, Pharaoh's daughter, that she might possess peace in life and after death repose.

Many days sat they in the ivory gallery, beneath its gold encrusted arch. The dwarf Khafre, which was the King's familiar, sat at the door forbidden to vex them with listening, and therefore ever fingering his lute, big bodied as himself and sweet-sounding as the voice of one bringing gifts. Sitting thus upon the cushioned alabaster floor, at the hour when Amon-Ra spreads his crimson banner across the westward sky, Amenteh asked concerning the gods of Phœnicia; and Ithobaal answered, "We have but one, whose name I bear—Baal, the Sun-god, whom the Egyptians call Amon-Ra, the only god whose gifts all humanity acknowledge; whose rising is a cup brimming with gladness, whose beams ripen the harvest, and paint the flowers, and illumine the eyes we love; whose light gives the mountains their purple and the sea its diadem, and at the close of day lends to Earth a crowning and poetic charm."

Moreover, being a man of war, he told Amenteh of lands beyond the sea where with a javelin he had slain a giant, adding, with a smile, "Who knows but I may come to my end at the hand of a little man!" Tyre, his native city, with its marble Temple open to the sun, he declared the salt of the sea, as Egypt is the salt of the land, for his talk was like unpainted pictures. Then, when she questioned him of star-reading and of the Chimera which is master of Red Magic, and which alone can stand before the Enchanter's wand, he answered, "What better magic is there than success?" Likewise when she asked, "What shall I do to be happy?" he answered, "Hath any life worth living not at least one thrilling sorrow? or can aught be sweeter than the long-lived day?" But once, the dwarf being called away, she murmured as to herself, "What should be the purpose of a maiden's life?" to which he whispered, "What avails life if it be not in tune with love!" Then suddenly, as though these words had been of magical power, she kissed him passionately upon the lips.

At that time Pharaoh made a feast at Memphis, the city of the powerful Bull, for Sevech, King of the land of Midian, in the Hall of Embroidered Hangings. Where, having sacrificed, he seated Sevech at his right hand upon the chair of peace, and gave him a girdle curiously wrought, and set a ring upon his hand. Likewise the dwarf Khafre anointed their heads with ointment and touched their ears with myrrh. The princes of the court sat according to their degree at a table apart. So when they had eaten eggs baked with bitter herbs, the minced flesh of a lamb, wrapped in savoury leaves, was set before them. And when they had drunk they did eat venison garnished with rice, after which Pharaoh took a roasted pigeon in his hand and parted it in sunder, and gave thereof to Sevech for a sign that they were brothers, for Pharaoh feared him and his men of war.

Then came the sweet-voiced girls, bearing matchless instruments, even their harps, and sat at Pharaoh's feet filling the air with delight. So with fruit and pastry the Kings emptied their wine jars, and Khafre crowned them with wreaths, bathing their hands with fragrant water. Finally Pharaoh saluted Sevech after the manner of the Egyptians, saying, "May Bastet give thee the Sesame wine of long life." At which words the Priests let fly birds for all people to know that Pharaoh and Sevech should be for ever friends.

When Sevech's heart was warm with wine, Pharaoh commanded his daughter to come before them, her ankles being girt with fillets of gold and her arms bound with pearls like tassels about the vine. But ere she danced she cast aside her slippers and her veil, standing rich-haired for a hushed and breathless moment, motionless and resplendent. Then the minstrels forbore, save only that from the

"Standing rich-haired for a hushed and breathless moment, motionless and resplendent."

river of Oblivion, where the lotus flowers grow, came faintly the music of the flute players, breathing into their bamboo flutes the music of the Night, and the music of them which sing the songs of the Morning. When Amenteh made an end of dancing, Sevech arose and emptying his winecup over his head, swore with an oath that she was beautiful. And lifting his quivering hand unto Pharaoh he cried, "Thou shalt give her me to wife, or, by all thy cage of gods, I will sink thy nose in the ground, and will rend thy kingdom, and bew thy people till the child shall seek its father in vain, and the jackals shall howl amid the ruins of this thy palace."

Then Pharaoh answered, "Thy words, O Circle of Light, are pleasant to me as riches after poverty." So the following day Pharaoh sought Amenteh and disclosed to her the words of Sevech. But she covered her face, saying, "Can one graft a rose upon nettles, or shall I be the bride of one who is swarthy, and whose land is a bleaching skeleton?" Then Pharaoh answered, "Thou shalt

indeed be made a Queen and drink deep of the glamoor of life. Behold, Sevech's money is all gold and no silver, and his kingdom is vast, so that whithersoever thou journey, whether it be with or against the wind, the land is still his. A land of rocks and sand, whose groves are each, for it is the desert; nevertheless, what things thou shalt ask, whether it be camels or jewels, or raiment or handmaidens, will he cheerfully take for thee from his neighbours." Then spake Amenteh, "Lord of the two horns, thy daughter, who is the dust of thy feet, hath heard it said that every ass thinks himself fit to stand with the King's horses." Therefore was Pharaoh grieved, and cried, "Shall mine own child kindle a fire under my stool!" But he returned to Sevech and told him what Amenteh had said. Then, when Khafre heard these things, he said unto Sevech, "Dispenser of good things, give me a gift, and let my head be in thy hand if I do not read this riddle." So Sevech gave him a gift, and Khafre said, "Be it known unto thee, O lover of knowledge, that there dwelleth in the palace a Phœnician, a beautiful man, and a magician, who expounds to the Princess music and the stars; such a man, sometimes, though not loud tongued, aspires to the daughter of a King." At which Sevech questioned the dwarf, saying, "Who told thee this?" And Khafre laughed, answering, "The Chimera, which lurketh in the garden, in whose yellow eyes one may read the secrets of the Ages, even the web of Fate, hath revealed it." So Sevech became as a panther of the South for rage, and bade Khafre walk in the garden with this man, that he might know his face

The garden of the Pharaohs, called Heartsease, is set between the palace and the river. It is here the young women come to bathe, and here the scribes, the Priests, the Princes, and the Prophets likewise come to talk upon the beautiful land of peace where the immortal acacias bloom. Wherein the Kings of Egypt each dedicate four figures upon the palace wall an image of their guardian, whether it be Isis, the beautifully enthroned, or Thoth of the waving plumes, or Horus the adorably silent. And among flowering plants the King's own image with splendid crest is placed, and behind it a fountain of flowers, and on either hand the face of the woman he hath most loved, and the face of his dearest friend. Wherefore for ever, although unseen between the box-rows of that garden, are the footsteps of bygone days. It is here the King breathes the lotus incense and learns the mystical meaning of the fleeting river, which is Oblivion, bearing us on its fugitive tide. Beyond which river in the distance stretches that faint and shining horizon which presages a World beyond the tomb. There, beneath the bending boughs, Pharaoh walks, gazing, as a King should, above the transient things of Earth, knowing the praise of gardens and that every garden is a world. There also dwells the Chimera which is the Master of the Magicians, lulled by the bamboo flute players, knowing the secret of the Future, which is breathed in the meaning of a musical sound. To a man to whom music and the stars say nothing will the Chimera not speak, but at the close of day it cometh forth to stand beside the lotus flowers, gazing upon the western sky where, with each dying sunset, rekindles the deathless splendour of the past. For the Chimera's wisdom lies in the inspiration of luminous distance, where, beyond the palm-tops and the clouds, it divines the waving hands of Fate.

When Sevech had taken his bow and an Egyptian arrow he hid himself in Pharaoh's garden; and when Itholnal and the dwarf passed, he let fly the arrow, that it pierced Itholnal and he fell. But Khafre lifted his voice and cried, "Who hath done this thing?" And the guards of the palace drew forth the arrow, and behold, although it was the arrow of an Egyptian, its feathers were trimmed after

the manner of the desert. Then carried they Ithobaal to his chamber, and the Chimera came and licked the blood where he had lain. But the Princes of Egypt and the Priests and the Officers of the Guard cried out upon Sevech, so that he fled from the city and came to the land of the Shepherd Kings, and called his captains together with all his host to march against the land of Egypt.

Ithobaal touching Amenteh

After Ithobaal was healed Pharaoh came privily to his chamber, and a fierce anger leaped to the King's eyes when he beheld Amenteh standing by the Phœnician's bedside, and Pharaoh rebuked Ithobaal, saying, "Thou hast bewitched my daughter!" But she answered unabashed, "Shall I let this man suffer alone, seeing for my sake that cut-purse wounded him?" And she cried against the Shepherd King, "If thou meet Sevech and a serpent, let the serpent go, but smite me Sevech." Then Pharaoh sent her weeping to her handmaids, and commanded Ithobaal that he become that selfsame day a Priest of Amon Ra.

Now when Pharaoh and his host were gathered on the borders of Midian, Sevech, big with victory and splendid as the right eye of the dawn, rode at the head of his horsemen towards the camp of the Egyptians, to judge their number. And he came unaware into the midst of the Egyptian archers where they lay hid, so that the captains beside him were slain, and his horse fell, and he was left full of wounds on the ground. When his men beheld this they fled with a tumult till they vanished behind the uttermost hills, their horses flooded with foam. Then Pharaoh called his headsmen and bade them tear out Sevech's tongue, whereat the Princes of Egypt laughed, saying, "Prophesy now, thou sharp-fangs, of the ruin of our palaces, wherein the jackals shall howl." Then the headsmen heated gold, and poured it molten upon King Sevech's eyes, and Pharaoh mocked him saying, "Tell me, thou who hast beheld the beauty of my daughter, what is now the delight of thine eyes?"

(Three lines effaced.)

. . . while Pharaoh was warring in Midian, Ithobaal came from the Temple which stands a bow-shot from the Palace, and bowed before Amenteh saying, "Behold, O Princess, a messenger who falls seven times at thy feet. The command

of Amon-Ra is that to-night, at the hour of the tuning of the lutes, when the crescent has sunk behind the palms, you come to him alone in the Court of his Temple, even in the mysterious Hall of the Rising Sun, that he may reveal the poem of life. And he—that is immortal as an echo, and who is awake when mortals sleep—shall be bound to you with the chain of Love, so that he shall betroth himself, in faithfulness, as the husband of your youth."

That evening, at the hour of the tuning of the lutes, as Amenteh approached the Temple softly and unseen, its graceful and towering pillars in the starlight of that dustless air seemed made to lift the thoughts towards Heaven. In the midst of its flexes, the Chambers of the Sun, with painted pillars and sculptured statues, rose in silence above the little noise of men, and its grandeur acquired the significance of a supernatural inspiration. In its foot-worn courts not one remained of all them that thronged by day, neither was heard the voice of the Priests that chant, nor the words of the Prophets that prophesy. So she paused beside the altar, whose carving in the darkness was like russet-stained ivory, and about which still hung a breath of the spice cakes which all that day the Vulture charmers had burned. When suddenly, a silent phantom advanced from the shadow of the night, as it were from the stones of the wall, and she beheld that it was Amon-Ra in the semblance of a beautiful man. Then were they powerfully and irresistibly drawn one to the other, and while through the night the nightingale sent the swift arrow of its thrilling song, he led her amid the flexes and folded her in the embrace of his love. And, listening to the ripple of the river of Oblivion, she knew that the delight of that hour would always seem near, and that, however swiftly the years might glide upon its current, they could never bear it wholly from her into their fading distance.

Then whispered the Sun god—he whose voice is as the sound of pipes to a hunter at rest—"Be it added to the renown of Amon-Ra that he possessed the love of a beautiful woman, for which mortals are proud to die,—for which, alone, a god should aspire to live." And he gave her for a memorial and as a talisman of joy, a sapphire ram's head set in a fillet of gold, even the diadem of the King of the gods, the carving whereof was beyond the cunning of the artificers of Egypt, and its beauty more refined than the sparkling of many gems, so that whoever beholds it perceives that it is the gift of a god.

She answered, "After I am no more, and in the cycles of Time when the glory of Egypt is departed, these silent walls, perhaps, shall keep the inspiration of the love of Amon-Ra and remain for ever beautiful."

Then declared he, whose eyes are like the exuberant sight of the sunlit sea, "As surely as sunshine on the mountains marks my passing footsteps, shalt thou stand with me hereafter amid the glory of the Sun, whose rising and setting outlive the transient things of Earth."

Then, at the hour of the fading away of the heavenly ones, the never-setting stars, when Amenteh perceived the breath of dawn in her nostrils, she departed softly and unseen as she had come.

Now Pharaoh returned from the borders of Midian, and straightway called the dwarf Khafre, and privily bade him summon ten horsemen of the guard, and take Ithobaal and bind him and set him upon a camel and journey six days into the desolate places of the Desert and six days back again without him. Therefore Osiris granted to the Phœnician the final and not least benediction of a swift and sudden departure—as one who lifts the drapery and passes to outer chambers to be seen no more. So, although for many days none knew these things, thus was curiously accomplished the word which Ithobaal had spoken to Amenteh, that his

end should be compassed by a little man. Wherefore Pharaoh caused Khafre to be seven times decorated with gold.

But when Pharaoh's daughter discovered what was done, she turned like a flaming fire upon the dwarf, and coming upon him unaware, reviled and cursed him and spat in his face. And she sought a sharp sword to slay Khafre, but ere it was found she fell in a swoon. Whereat the dwarf's face turned to ashy paleness, and he feared to dwell in the palace, although he was the King's familiar, for Amenteh hired men to take his life. From which time also, the Sun-god appeared to her no more. Nevertheless, although the memory which alone survived to Amenteh became a tragic shadow, it yet seemed, the rest of her days, more luminous and delightful than all else beside

When the summer was come, Pharaoh's daughter walked with her handmaids through the palm orchard by the river, and the maidens cast aside their veils and

"He let fly the arrow, that it pierced Thobtal"

slippers to bathe, for it was the heat of the day. So with the ripple of the river blended the ripple of their mirth. And they were beautiful as crimson oleanders, and the water kissed their feet, and Amenteh was in their midst as the pearl set in a ring. Then she came upon a chest caught in the bulrushes, at the edge of the meadow grass, wherein was a babe. But before they laid a hand upon the chest, the child cried, and Amenteh's heart leaped within her. So she said, "He shall be called Thut-Mosis, for from the water we take him." But her handmaids laughed, saying, "How know ye that it is a man-child?" Whereat Amenteh was silent, but the Chimera came forth from among the wild hyacinths and lay at her feet and looked fixedly in her eyes. When the maidens lifted the chest they rejoiced saying, "Verily Sechet shall watch his sleep, and when he traverseth deep water Anubis shall lead him by the hand; and hereafter Socharis, the crusher, the compeller of things, who holds the key of earthly felicity, shall unlock for him the portal of an everlasting abode."

At which selfsame hour Pharaoh rested in his garden watching the swelling of

the river and giving his mind to calm, oblivious for the moment to the sordid course of Time, and the silence of the garden was quickened only by the twittering of birds. At noon he had been borne to the interment of Ptah-Mes, Captain of the Horse, and had returned wearied with the noise and glitter of that pageant—the blaze of trumpets, the throng of mourners, the procession of slaves and burden-bearers with gazelles and peacocks and ostriches and apes; the populace attracted from shops and trellised housetops into the dazzling sunlight; the strangers from afar, the camels and horses and barking dogs. Now, at the edge of the river a kingfisher dived, and in an instant of sudden illumination Pharaoh comprehended, with the light of a new and intuitive revelation, the multiplicity of influences whereof man is the curious product, and caught the grotesque resemblance that through all ages, beneath varying phases, lends to life the same characteristics, with the same fateful and absurd reiteration. A sunbeam flashed across his dream, changing illusion to reality. He understood, with mental vision preternaturally clear, that, for himself, these things were past. Instinctively his lips moved in the phrase of a whispered farewell, but none listened—not even the gods. Till suddenly, before him rose the spirit of Ptah-Mes, whose body had been laid at rest that morning, who in life had been the companion of Pharaoh's youth, the friend and adviser of his maturity, and who now addressed him with ominous words.

"Lo, the dead awaken, and the knot that bound is untied, and the Dream which the Seer could not interpret is revealed. The ruined greatness of thy successors shall linger alone amid the desolation of Egypt. From generation to generation, and from reign to reign, the monuments shall become more and more silent,—their message spoken, their names obliterated, their last words scarcely understood. Yet even then, in those remote ages, shall the shades of the gods return to stand beside the open grave of their Egyptian Kingdom. This day hath been saved from the waters of Oblivion, one that shall bring strange and fearful calamities. Though born in obscurity, his name shall remain famous when thine, O Sethos, is forgotten. Though he eat of the ashes of bondage, he shall become greater than the lords of the thrones. Though an outcast and a fugitive, he shall spoil the Egyptians, and glory in the overthrow of their host. Though thou art passing away in the morning of Egypt, his words shall endure till the evening of the longest day."

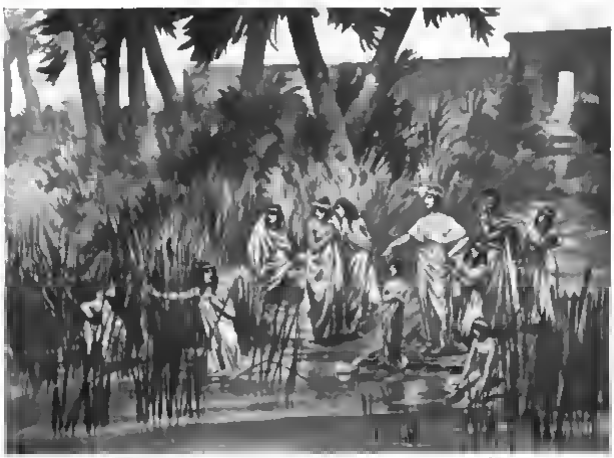
Then Pharaoh's pierced and freezing heart knew that it was a presage, and as he started, the kingfisher rose from the water, and flew with flight of distant rustling wings away.

So when Pharaoh sprang to his feet in anger and affright, and was told how a man-child had been drawn from the river of Oblivion, he cried, "Ye waste time: let the child be slain, and have done." But none knew where to seek, for Amenteh had given money to an Hebrew woman to hide the child, that it might be saved alive. And that night, when all the land of Egypt slept, Osiris, who is lord of the greatest of all Kingdoms, opened wide the portal, and beckoned, and Pharaoh passed beyond the transient things of Earth. So Seti-Meneph-Tah ruled in his father's stead, and afflicted the Hebrews which were in bondage, wherefore Amenteh took Thut-Mosis and he became her son.

As years passed, Pharaoh's daughter often returned to sit in the Temple of Amon-Ra, to sing there as she sang in the days of her youth. And her prayer was thus: "O sweet-voiced Isis, thou that tunest the lutes of the Evening, grant me a heart in tune with the song of birds at break of Day."

Thus gazing from the mysterious Hall of the Rising Sun, through long-drawn

rhythmic hours across the waters of Oblivion, it came to be her gladness to believe that both the living and the dead forget not, but remember. Yea, from her gilded windows, across roof-tops and porticoes and hovels, her heart leaped ever toward the awakening beauty of the Dawn. At her feet stretched the life of the multitude, the life whose cares, and duties and pleasures she understood without having tasted. And looking forth from the shadow of her retirement, and knowing that many on whom rests the effulgence of life are blind to its splendour, she thought, "How would they envy me, who live in the darkness of Sorrow, did they know that I see and understand and love the light of Joy!" Nevertheless, her heart, which had opened but once, closed for ever, so that none, save only the Chimera, knew its secret. When her brother, King Seti-Meneph-Tah, offered her in marriage, she would not, saying within herself, "Shall I, that have been loved by a



"He shall be called Thut-Mosis, for from the water we take him."

god, wed with a man!" Likewise, knowing she should be freed from the infirmity of age, she besought to be buried in a maiden's tomb, wherein neither man nor woman had lain.

When finally Osiris, in the darkness of an opening day, threw wide before Amenteh the land of turquoise and crystal, which is the land of life, where the old shall become young and the young shall never grow old, she bade her maidens lift her to the gilded window which looks towards the east. So behold, when she was seated in her accustomed place, and the curtain drawn aside, it was the break of day, and her face brightened at its coming radiance. And while they watched in silence, she passed beyond the gates of Dawn, and her heart was lifted whither her eyes had so long been fixed—towards the land of the Rising Sun.

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The Greek monk at Patmos was right in pronouncing the singular narrative contained in his manuscript one of unusual import. It ranks, with its quaint

and musical repetitions, among the oldest love-stories of ancient times, and its authorship is doubtless lost "in the River of Oblivion." Imperfect as is our knowledge of the Pharaohs, we may believe they were not exempt from human frailty. It may also be affirmed that Pharaoh's daughter merely anticipated the Greeks in attributing to Amon-Ra, who was mythologically akin to Zeus, an amorous passion resembling those in which the Thunderer delighted. In all mythical ages the gods have shown a willingness to interest themselves so far in humanity as to make love to the beautiful daughters of men.

The second chapter of the Book of Exodus gives significant intimation that Moses was bound to the Royal family of Egypt by a stronger tie than the charity which rescued a foundling. Had the Hebrew woman to whom the infant discovered among the bulrushes was entrusted, been its mother, she would hardly have received wages to rear her own child. Had Moses been no more to Pharaoh's daughter than the abandoned offspring of Hebrew servitude, there could have been little reason for his subsequent return to her, and still less that he should "become her son." In physical appearance the Hebrews and Egyptians were in marked contrast. Yet the Midianite girl, Zipporah, whom Moses married, describing to her father her meeting with him at the well, refers to him as "an Egyptian," which justifies the surmise that if Moses, a Hebrew, possessed the racial type of Egypt, it was due to a perfectly natural cause.

Some years ago at Ghizeh, amid the tombs of queens and princesses of the early dynasties, was exhumed the mummy of a woman, whose inscription declared her to be "Amenteh, Pharaoh's daughter, unmarried, beautifully enthroned, and *the beloved of Amon-Ra*." The features of the mummy case, usually intended as a crude presentment of the deceased, mark a type of exceptional grace and intelligence. The skeleton has been stripped of its wrappings, and the visitor from lands unknown to ancient Egypt may behold, under glass, the crumbling fragments of one whose dramatic story identifies her with a scene the Old Testament has preserved and made familiar. Can it be that this was the mother as well as the finder of the infant "Thut-Mosis"?

Bound about the blackened brow, as in defiance of the grave's decay, was a sapphire ram's head of exquisite workmanship—a startling token, if the manuscript may be believed, of that amorous passion for the sake whereof, its decorous phrase declares, "mortals are proud to die, and for which, alone, a god should aspire to live."

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

A CASE OF EAVES-DROPPING.

JIM SHORTHOUSE was the sort of fellow who always made a mess of things. Everything with which his hands or mind came into contact issued from such contact in an unqualified and irremediable state of mess. His college days were a mess; he was twice rusticated. His schooldays were a mess; he went to half a dozen, each passing him on to the next with a worse character and in a more developed state of mess. His early boyhood was the sort of mess that copy books and dictionaries spell with a big "M," and his babyhood—ugh! was the embodiment of a howling, yowling, screaming mess.

At the age of forty, however, there came a change in his troubled life, when he met a girl with half a million in her own right, who consented to marry him, and who very soon succeeded in reducing his most messy existence into a state of comparative order and system.

Certain incidents, important and otherwise, of Jim's life would never have come to be told here but for the fact that in getting into his "messes" and out of them again he succeeded in drawing himself into the atmosphere of peculiar circumstances and strange happenings. He attracted to his path the curious adventures of life as unfailingly as meat attracts flies, and jam wasps. It is to the meat and jam of his life, so to speak, that he owes his experiences; his after life was all pudding, which attracts nothing but greedy children. With marriage the interest of his life ceased for all but one person, and his path became regular as the sun's instead of erratic as a comet's.

The first experience in order of time that he related to me shows that somewhere latent behind his disarranged nervous system there lay psychic perceptions of an uncommon order. About the age of twenty-two—I think after his second rustication—his father's purse and patience had equally given out, and Jim found himself stranded high and dry in a large American city. High and dry! And the only clothes that had no holes in them safely in the keeping of his uncle's wardrobe.

Careful reflection on a bench in one of the city parks led him to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to persuade the city editor of one of the daily journals that he possessed an observant mind and a ready pen, and that he could "do good work for your paper, sir, as a reporter." This, then, he did, standing at a most unnatural angle between the editor and the window to conceal the whereabouts of the holes.

"Guess we'll have to give you a week's trial," said the editor, who, ever on the look-out for good chance material, took on shoals of men in that way and

retained on the average one man per shoal. Anyhow it gave Jim Shorthouse the wherewithal to sew up the holes and relieve his uncle's wardrobe of its burden.

Then he went to find living quarters, and in this proceeding his unique characteristics already referred to—what theosophists would call his Karma—began unmistakably to assert themselves, for it was in the house he eventually selected that this sad tale took place.

There are no "diggings" in American cities. The alternatives for small incomes are grim enough—rooms in a boarding-house where meals are served, or in a room-house where no meals are served—not even breakfast. Rich people

"'Guess we'll have to give you a week's trial.'"

live in palaces, of course, but Jim had nothing to do with "sich-like." His horizon was bounded with boarding-houses and room-houses; and, owing to the necessary irregularity of his meals and hours, he took the latter.

It was a large, gaunt-looking place in a side street, with dirty windows and a creaking iron gate, but the rooms were large, and the one he selected and paid for in advance was on the top floor. The landlady looked gaunt and dusty as the house, and quite as old. Her eyes were green and faded, and her features large.

"Waal," she twanged with her electrifying Western drawl, "that's the room, if you like it, and that's the price I said. Now, if you want it, why, just say so; and if you don't, why, it don't hurt me any."

Jim wanted to shake her, but he feared the clouds of long-accumulated dust in her clothes, and as the price and size of the room suited him, he decided to take it.

"Any one else on this floor?" he asked.

She looked at him queerly out of her faded eyes before she answered.

"None of my guests ever put such questions to me before," she said, "but I guess you're different. Why, there's no one at all but an old gent that's stayed here every bit of five years. He's over thar," pointing to the end of the passage.

"Ah! I see," said Shorthouse, feebly. "So I'm alone up here?"

"Reckon you are, pretty near," she twanged out, ending the conversation abruptly by turning her back on her new "guest," and going slowly and deliberately downstairs.

The newspaper work kept Shorthouse out most of the night. Three times a week he got home at 1 a.m., and three times at 3 a.m. The room proved comfortable enough, and he paid for a second week. His unusual hours had so far prevented his meeting any inmates of the house, and not a sound had been heard from the "old gent" who shared the floor with him. It seemed a very quiet house.

One night, about the middle of the second week, he came home tired after a long day's work. The lamp that usually stood all night in the hall had burned itself out, and he had to stumble upstairs in the dark. He made considerable noise in doing so, but nobody seemed to be disturbed. The whole house was utterly quiet, and probably everybody was asleep. There were no lights under any of the doors. All was in darkness. It was after two o'clock.

After reading some English letters that had come during the day, and dipping for a few minutes into a book, he became drowsy and got ready for bed. Just as he was about to get in between the sheets, he stopped for a moment and listened. There rose in the night, as he did so, the sound of steps somewhere in the house below. Listening attentively, he heard that it was somebody coming upstairs—a heavy tread, and the owner taking no pains to step quietly. On it came up the stairs, tramp, tramp, tramp—evidently the tread of a big man, and one in something of a hurry.

At once thoughts connected somehow with fire and police flashed through Jim's brain, but there were no sounds of voices with the steps, and he reflected in the same moment that it could only be the old gentleman keeping late hours and tumbling upstairs in the darkness. He was in the act of turning out the gas and stepping into bed, when the house resumed its former stillness by the footsteps suddenly coming to a dead stop immediately outside his own room.

With his hand on the gas, Shorthouse paused a moment before turning it out to see if the steps would go on again, when he was startled by a loud knocking on his door. Instantly, in obedience to a curious and unexplained instinct, he turned out the light, leaving himself and the room in total darkness.

He had scarcely taken a step across the room to open the door, when a voice from the other side of the wall, so close it almost sounded in his ear, exclaimed in German, "Is that you, father? Come in!"

The speaker was a man in the next room, and the knocking, after all, had not been on his own door, but on that of the adjoining chamber, which he had supposed to be vacant.

Almost before the man in the passage had time to answer in German, "Let me in at once," Jim heard some one cross the floor and unlock the door. Then

it was slammed to with a bang, and there was audible the sound of footsteps about the room, and of chairs being drawn up to a table and knocking against furniture on the way. The men seemed wholly regardless of their neighbour's comfort, for they made noise enough to waken the dead.

"Serves me right for taking a room in such a cheap hole," reflected Jim in the darkness. "I wonder whom she's let the room to!"

The two rooms, the landlady had told him, were originally one. She had put up a thin partition—just a row of boards—to increase her income. The doors were adjacent, and only separated by the massive upright beam between them. When one was opened or shut the other rattled.

With utter indifference to the comfort of the other sleepers in the house, the two Germans had meanwhile commenced to talk both at once and at the top of their voices. They talked emphatically, even angrily. The words "Father" and "Otto" were freely used. Shorthouse understood German, but as he stood listening for the first minute or two, an eaves-dropper in spite of himself, it was difficult to make head or tail of the talk, for neither would give way to the other, and the jumble of guttural sounds and unfinished sentences was wholly unintelligible. Then, very suddenly, both voices dropped together; and, after a moment's pause, the deep tones of one of them, who seemed to be the "father," said, with the utmost distinctness:—

"You mean, Otto, that you refuse to get it?"

There was a sound of some one shuffling in the chair before the answer came.

"I mean that I don't know how to get it. It is so much, father. It is *too* much. A part of it——"

"A part of it!" cried the other, with an angry oath, "a part of it, when ruin and disgrace are already in the house, is worse than useless. If you can get half you can get all, you wretched fool. Half-measures only damn all concerned."

"You told me last time——" began the other firmly, but was not allowed to finish. A succession of horrible oaths drowned his sentence, and the father went on, in a voice vibrating with anger:—

"You know she will give you anything. You have only been married a few months. If you ask and give a plausible reason you can get all we want and more. You can ask it temporarily. All will be paid back. It will re-establish the firm, and she will never know what was done with it. With that amount, Otto, you know I can recoup all these terrible losses, and in less than a year all will be repaid. But without it. . . . You must get it, Otto. Hear me, you must. Am I to be arrested for the misuse of trust moneys? Is our honoured name to be cursed and spat on?" The old man choked and stammered in his anger and desperation.

Shorthouse stood shivering in the darkness and listening in spite of himself. The conversation had carried him along with it, and he had been for some reason afraid to let his neighbourhood be known. But at this point he realised that he had listened too long and that he must inform the two men that they could be overheard to every single syllable. So he coughed loudly, and at the same time rattled the handle of his door. It seemed to have no effect, for the voices continued just as loudly as before, the son protesting and the father growing more and more angry. He coughed again persistently, and also contrived purposely in the darkness to tumble against the partition, feeling the thin boards yield easily under his weight, and making considerable noise in so doing. But the voices went on unconcernedly, and louder than ever. Could it be possible they had not heard?

By this time Jim was more concerned about his own sleep than the morality

of overhearing the private scandals of his neighbours, and he went out into the passage and knocked smartly at their door. Instantly, as if by magic, the sounds ceased. Everything dropped into utter silence. There was no light under the door and not a whisper could be heard within. He knocked again, but received no answer.

"Gentlemen," he began at length with his lips close to the keyhole, and in German, "please do not talk so loud. I can overhear all you say in the next room. Besides, it is very late, and I wish to sleep."

He paused and listened, but no answer was forthcoming. He turned the handle and found the door was locked. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night except the faint swish of the wind over the skylight and the creaking of a board here and there in the house below. The cold air of a very early morning crept down the passage, and made him shiver. The silence of the house began to impress him disagreeably. He looked behind him and about him, hoping, and yet fearing, that something would break the stillness. The voices still seemed to ring on in his ears, but that sudden silence, when he knocked at the door, affected him far more unpleasantly than the voices, and put strange thoughts in his brain—thoughts he did not like or approve.

Moving stealthily from the door, he peered over the banisters into the space below. It was like a deep vault that might conceal in its shadows anything that was not good. It was not difficult to fancy he saw an indistinct moving to-and-fro below him. Was that a figure sitting on the stairs peering up obliquely at him out of hideous eyes? Was that a sound of whispering and shuffling down there in the dark halls and forsaken landings? Was it something more than the inarticulate murmur of the night?

The wind made an effort overhead, singing over the skylight, and the door behind him rattled and made him start. He turned to go back to his room, and the draught closed the door slowly in his face as if there were some one pressing against it from the other side. When he pushed it open and went in, a hundred shadowy forms seemed to dart swiftly and silently back to their corners and hiding-places. But in the adjoining room the sounds had entirely ceased, and Shorthouse soon crept into bed, and left the house with its inmates, waking or sleeping, to take care of themselves, while he entered the region of dreams and silence.

Next day, strong in the common sense that the sunlight brings, he determined to lodge a complaint against the noisy occupants of the next room and make the landlady request them to modify their voices at such late hours of the night and morning. But it so happened that she was not to be seen that day, and when he returned from the office at midnight it was, of course, too late.

Looking under the door as he came up to bed he noticed that there was no light, and concluded that the Germans were not in. So much the better. He went to sleep about one o'clock, fully decided that if they came up later and woke him with their horrible noises he would not rest till he had roused the landlady and made her reprove them with that authoritative twang, in which every word was like the lash of a metallic whip.

However, there proved to be no need for such drastic measures, for Shorthouse slumbered peacefully all night, and his dreams—chiefly of the fields of grain and flocks of sheep on the far-away farms of his father's estate—were permitted to run their fanciful course unbroken.

Two nights later, however, when he came home tired out, after a difficult day, and wet and blown about by one of the wickedest storms he had ever seen, his dreams—always of the fields and sheep—were not destined to be so undisturbed.

He had already dozed off in that delicious glow that follows the removal of wet clothes and the immediate snuggling under warm blankets, when his consciousness, hovering on the borderland between sleep and waking, was vaguely troubled by a sound that rose indistinctly from the depths of the house, and, between the gusts of wind and rain, reached his ears with an accompanying sense of uneasiness and discomfort. It rose on the night air with some pretence of regularity, dying away again in the roar of the wind to reassert itself distantly in the deep, brief hushes of the storm.

For a few minutes Jim's dreams were coloured only—tinged, as it were, by this impression of fear approaching from somewhere insensibly upon him. His consciousness, at first, refused to be drawn back from that enchanted region where it had wandered, and he did not immediately awaken. But the nature of his dreams changed unpleasantly. He saw the sheep suddenly run huddled together, as though frightened by the neighbourhood of an enemy, while the fields of waving corn became agitated as though some monster were moving uncouthly among the crowded stalks. The sky grew dark, and in his dream an awful sound came somewhere from the clouds. It was in reality the sound downstairs growing more distinct.

Shorthouse shifted uneasily across the bed with something like a groan of distress. The next minute he awoke, and found himself sitting straight up in bed—listening. Was it a nightmare? Had he been dreaming evil dreams, that his flesh crawled and the hair stirred on his head?

The room was dark and silent, but outside the wind howled dismally and drove the rain with repeated assaults against the rattling windows. How nice it would be—the thought flashed through his mind—if all winds, like the west wind, went down with the sun! They made such fiendish noises at night, like the crying of angry voices. In the daytime they had such a different sound. If only——

Hark! It was no dream after all, for the sound was momentarily growing louder, and its *cause* was coming up the stairs. He found himself speculating feebly what this cause might be, but the sound was still too indistinct to enable him to arrive at any definite conclusion.

The voice of a church clock striking two made itself heard above the wind. It was just about the hour when the Germans had commenced their performance three nights before. Shorthouse made up his mind that if they began it again he would not put up with it for very long. Yet he was already horribly conscious of the difficulty he would have of getting out of bed. The clothes were so warm and comforting against his back. The sound, still steadily coming nearer, had by this time become differentiated from the confused clamour of the elements, and had resolved itself into the footsteps of one or more persons.

"The Germans, hang 'em!" thought Jim. "But what on earth is the matter with me? I never felt so queer in all my life."

He was trembling all over, and felt as cold as though he were in a freezing atmosphere. His nerves were steady enough, and he felt no diminution of physical courage, but he was conscious of a curious sense of malaise and trepidation, such as even the most vigorous men have been known to experience when in the first grip of some horrible and deadly disease. As the footsteps approached this feeling of weakness increased. He felt a strange lassitude creeping over him, a sort of exhaustion, accompanied by a growing numbness in the extremities, and a sensation of dreaminess in the head, as if perhaps the consciousness were leaving its accustomed seat in the brain and preparing to act on another plane. Yet,

strange to say, as the vitality was slowly withdrawn from his body, his senses seemed to grow more acute.

Meanwhile the steps were already on the landing at the top of the stairs, and Shorthouse, still sitting upright in bed, heard a heavy body brush past his door and along the wall outside, and almost immediately afterwards, the loud knocking of some one's knuckles on the door of the adjoining room.

Instantly, though so far not a sound had proceeded from within, he heard, through the thin partition, a chair pushed back and a man quickly cross the floor and open the door.

"Ah! it's you," he heard in the son's voice. Had the fellow, then, been sitting silently in there all this time, waiting for his father's arrival? To Shorthouse it came not as a pleasant reflection by any means.

There was no answer to this dubious greeting, but the door was closed quietly, and then there was a sound as if a bag or parcel had been thrown on a wooden table and had slid some distance across it before stopping.

"What's that?" asked the son, with anxiety in his tone.

"You may know before I go," returned the other gruffly. Indeed his voice was more than gruff: it betrayed ill-suppressed passion.

Shorthouse was conscious of a strong desire to stop the conversation before it proceeded any further, but somehow or other his will was not equal to the task, and he could not get out of bed. The conversation went on, every tone and inflexion distinctly audible above the noise of the storm.

In a low voice the father continued. Jim missed some of the words at the beginning of the sentence. It ended with: ". . . but now they've all left, and I've managed to get up to you. You know what I've come for." There was distinct menace in his tone.

"Yes," returned the other; "I have been waiting."

"And the money?" asked the father impatiently.

No answer.

"You've had three days to get it in, and I've contrived to stave off the worst so far—but to-morrow is the end."

No answer.

"Speak, Otto! What have you got for me? Speak, my son, for God's sake, tell me."

There was a moment's silence, during which the old man's vibrating accents seemed to echo through the rooms. Then came in a low voice the answer:

"I have nothing."

"Otto!" cried the other with passion, "nothing!"

"I can get nothing," came almost in a whisper.

"You lie!" cried the other, in a half-stifled voice. "I swear you lie. Give me the money."

A chair was heard scraping along the floor. Evidently the men had been sitting over the table, and one of them had risen. Shorthouse heard the bag or parcel drawn across the table, and then a step as if one of the men was crossing to the door.

"Father, what's in that? I must know," said Otto, with the first signs of determination in his voice. There must have been an effort on the son's part to gain possession of the parcel in question, and on the father's to retain it, for between them it fell to the ground. A curious rattle followed its contact with the floor. Instantly there were sounds of a scuffle. The men were struggling for the possession of the box. The elder man with oaths, and blasphemous imprecations, the other with short gasps that betokened the strength of his efforts.

It was of short duration, and the younger man had evidently won, for a minute later was heard his angry exclamation.

"I knew it. Her jewels! You scoundrel, you shall never have them. It is a crime"

The elder man uttered a short, guttural laugh, which froze Jim's blood and made his skin creep. No word was spoken, and for the space of ten seconds there was a living silence. Then the air trembled with the sound of a thud, followed immediately by a groan and the crash of a heavy body falling over on to the table. A second later there was a lurching from the table on to the floor and against the partition that separated the rooms. The bed quivered an instant at the shock, but the unholy spell was lifted from his soul and Jim Shorthouse sprang out of bed and across the floor in a single bound. He knew that ghastly murder had been done—the murder by a father of his son.

With shaking fingers but a determined heart he lit the gas, and the first thing in which his eyes corroborated the evidence of his ears was the horrifying detail that the lower portion of the partition bulged unnaturally into his room. The glaring paper with which it was covered had cracked under the tension and the boards beneath it bent inwards towards him. What hideous load was behind them, he shuddered to think.

All this he saw in less than a second. Since the final lurch against the wall not a sound had proceeded from the room not even a groan or a footstep. All was still but the howl of the wind, which to his ears had in it a note of triumphant horror.

Shorthouse was in the act of leaving the room to rouse the house and send for the police—in fact his hand was already on the door-knob—when something in the room arrested his attention. Out of the corner of his eyes he thought he caught sight of something moving. He was sure of it, and turning his eyes in the direction, he found he was not mistaken.

Something was creeping slowly towards him along the floor. It was something dark and serpentine in shape, and it came from the place where the partition bulged. He stooped down to examine it with feelings of intense horror and repugnance, and he discovered that it was moving toward him from the *other side* of the wall. His eyes were fascinated, and for the moment he was unable to move. Silently, slowly, from side to side like a thick worm, it crawled forward into the room beneath his frightened eyes, until at length he could stand it no longer and stretched out his arm to touch it. But at the instant of contact he withdrew his hand with a suppressed scream. It was sluggish—and it was warm! and he saw that his fingers were stained with living crimson.

A second more, and Shorthouse was out in the passage with his hand on the door of the next room. It was locked. He plunged forward with all his weight against it, and, the lock giving way, he fell headlong into a room that was pitch dark and very cold. In a moment he was on his feet again and trying to penetrate the blackness. Not a sound, not a movement. Not even the sense of a presence. It was empty, miserably empty!

Across the room he could trace the outline of a window with rain streaming down the outside, and the blurred lights of the city beyond. But the room was empty, appallingly empty;—and so still. He stood there, cold as ice, staring, shivering, listening. Suddenly there was a step behind him and a light flashed into the room, and when he turned quickly with his arm up as if to ward off a terrific blow he found himself face to face with the landlady. Instantly the reaction began to set in

"Waal?" she drawled, "guess you couldn't sleep."

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning, and he was standing there with bare feet and striped pyjamas in a small room, which in the merciful light he perceived to be absolutely empty, carpetless, and without a stick of furniture, or even a window-blind. There he stood staring at the disagreeable landlady. And there she stood too, staring and silent, in a black wrapper, her head almost bald, her face white as chalk, shading a sputtering candle with one bony hand and peering over it at him with her blinking green eyes. She looked positively hideous.

"Waal?" she drawled at length, "I heard yer right enough. Guess you couldn't sleep? Or just prowlin round a bit—is that it?"

The empty room, the absence of all traces of the recent tragedy, the silence, the hour, his striped pyjamas and bare feet—everything together combined to deprive him momentarily of speech. He stared at her blankly without a word.

"Waal?" clanked the awful voice.

"My dear woman," he burst out finally, "there's been something awful——" So far his desperation took him, but no farther. He positively stuck at the substantive.

"Oh! there hasn't been nothin'," she said slowly, still peering at him. "I reckon you've only seen and heard what the others did. I never can keep folks on this floor long. Most of 'em catch on sooner or later—that is, the ones that's kind of quick and sensitive. Only you being an Englishman I thought you didn't mind. Nothin' really happens, it's only thinkin' like."

Shorthouse was beside himself. He felt ready to pick her up and drop her over the banisters, candle and all.

"Look there," he said, pointing at her within an inch of her blinking eyes with the fingers that had touched the oozing blood: "look there, my good woman Is that only thinking?"

She stared a minute, as if not knowing what he meant.

"I guess so," she said at length

He followed her eyes, and to his amazement saw that his fingers were as white as usual, and quite free from the awful stain that had been there ten minutes before. There was no sign of blood No amount of staring could bring it back. Had he gone out of his mind? Had his eyes and ears played such tricks with him? Had his senses become false and perverted? He dashed past the landlady, out into the passage, and gained his own room in a couple of strides. Whew! . . . the partition no longer bulged. The paper was not torn. There was no creeping, crawling thing on the faded old carpet . . .

"It's all over now," drawled the metallic voice behind him "I'm goin' to bed again"

He turned and saw the landlady slowly going downstairs again, still shading the candle with her hand and peering up at him from time to time as she moved. A black, ugly, unwholesome object, he thought, as she disappeared into the darkness below, and the last flicker of her candle threw a queer shaped shadow along the wall and over the ceiling.

Without hesitating a moment, Shorthouse threw himself into his clothes and went out of the house He preferred the storm to the horrors of that top floor, and he walked the streets till daylight. In the evening he told the landlady he would leave next day, in spite of her assurances that nothing more would happen.

"It never comes back," she said—"that is, not after he's killed."

Shorthouse gasped.

"You gave me a lot for my money," he growled.

"Waal, it aren't my show," she drawled. "I'm no spirit medium You takes chances. Some'll sleep right along and never hear nothin'. Others, like yourself, are different and get the whole thing."

"Who's the old gentleman?—does he hear it?" asked Jim

"There's no old gentleman at all," she answered coolly. "I just told you that to make you feel easy like in case you did hear anythin'. You were all alone on the floor"

"Say now," she went on, after a pause in which Shorthouse could think of nothing to say but unpublishable things,—"Say now, do tell, did you feel sort of cold when the show was on, sort of tired and weak, I mean, as if you might be going to die?"

"How can I say?" he answered savagely; "what I felt God only knows."

"Waal, but He won't tell," she drawled out. "Only I was wonderin' how you really did feel, because the man who had that room last was found one morning in bed——"

"In bed?"

"He was dead He was the one before you Oh! You don't need to get rattled so You're all right And it all really happened, they do say. This house used to be a private residence some twenty-five years ago, and a German family of the name of Steinhardt lived here. They had a big business in Wall Street, and stood 'way up in things."

"Ah!" said her listener

"Oh yes, they did, right at the top, till one fine day it all bust and the old man skipped with the boodle——"

"Skipped with the boodle?"

"That's so," she said; "got clear away with all the money, and the son was found dead in his house, committed soocide it was thought. Though there was some as said he couldn't have stabbed himself and fallen in that position. They said he was murdered. The father died in prison. They tried to fasten the murder on him, but there was no motive, or no evidence, or no somethin'. I forget now."

"Very pretty," said Shorthouse.

"I'll show you somethin' mighty queer anyways," she drawled, "if you'll come upstairs a minute. I've heard the steps and voices lots of times; they don't pheaze me any. I'd just as lief hear so many dogs barkin'. You'll find the whole story in the newspapers if you look it up—not what goes on here, but the story of the Germans. My house would be ruined if they told all, and I'd sue for damages."

They reached the bedroom, and the woman went in and pulled up the edge of the carpet where Shorthouse had seen the blood soaking in the previous night.

"Look thar, if you feel like it," said the old hag. Stooping down, he saw a dark, dull stain in the boards that corresponded exactly to the shape and position of the blood as he had seen it.

That night he slept in a hotel, and the following day sought new quarters. In the newspapers on file in his office after a long search he found twenty years back the detailed story, substantially as the woman had said, of Steinhardt & Co's failure, the absconding and subsequent arrest of the senior partner, and the suicide, or murder, of his son Otto. The landlady's room-house had formerly been their private residence.

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD.

LITTLE MISS MUFFET

(After a drawing by S. H. Sime.)

By ALBERT KINROSS.

[FRONTISPIECE BY SYDNEY H. SIME.]

BY A. T. QUILLER COUCH.

IN the kingdom of Illyria there lived, not long ago, a poor woodcutter, with three sons, who in time went forth to seek their fortunes. At the end of three years they returned by agreement to compare their progress in the world. The eldest had become a lawyer and the second a merchant, and each of these had won riches and friends; but John, the youngest, who had enlisted in the army, could only show a cork leg and a medal.

"You have made a bad business of it," said his brothers. "Your medal is worthless except to a collector of such things, and your leg a positive disadvantage. Fortunately we have influence, and since you are our brother we must see what we can do for you."

Now the King of Illyria lived at that time in his capital, in a brick palace at the end of the great park. He kept this park open to all, and allowed no one to build in it. But the richest citizens, who were so fond of their ruler that they could not live out of his sight, had their houses just beyond the park, in the rear of the palace, on a piece of ground which they called Palace Gardens. The name was a little misleading, for the true gardens lay in front of the palace, where children of all classes played among the trees and flower-beds and artificial ponds, and the King sat and watched them, because he took delight in children, and because the sight of them from his window cheered his only daughter, who had fallen into a deep melancholy. But the rich citizens clung to it, for it gave a pleasant, neighbourly air to their roadway, and showed what friendliness there was between the monarch of Illyria and his people.

At either end you entered the roadway (if you were allowed) by an iron gate, and each gate had a sentry-box beside it, and a tall beadle, and a notice-board to save him the trouble of explanation. The notice ran:

> PRIVATE. *The Beadle has orders to refuse admittance to all Waggons, Tradesmen's Carts, Hackney Coaches, Donkeys, Beggars, Disorderly Characters, or Persons carrying Burdens.*

A sedentary life had told so severely upon one of the two beadles that he could no longer enter his box with dignity or read his newspaper there with any comfort. He resigned, and John obtained the post, by his brothers' interest, in spite of his cork leg.

John had now a bright green suit with scarlet pipings, a gold laced hat, a fashionable address, and very little to do. But the army had taught him to be mobile, and for lack of anything better he exercised his wits. This came near to bring him into trouble. One evening he looked out of his sentry-box and saw a

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mild and somewhat sad-featured old gentleman approaching the gate.

"No admittance," said John.

"Tut, tut!" said the old gentleman. "I'm the King."

John looked at the face on his medal, and sure enough there was a resemblance. "But all the same, your Majesty carries a burden,"—here he pointed to the notice-board,—"and the folks along this road are mighty particular."

"Went forth to seek their fortunes."

The King smiled, and then sighed heavily.

"It's about the Princess, my daughter," said he. "she has not smiled for a whole year."

"I'll warrant I'd make her," said John.

"I'll warrant you could not," said the King. "She will never smile again until she is married."

"Then," answered John, "speaking in a humble way, as becomes me, why the dickens alive don't you marry her up and get done with it?"

The King shook his head.

"There's a condition attached," said he. "Maybe you have heard of the famous haunted house in Punsonby Square?"

"I've always gone by the spelling, and pronounced it Ponsonby," said John.

"Well, the condition is that every suitor for my daughter's hand must spend a night alone in that house, and if he should survive and be ready to persevere with his wooing, he must return a year later with his bride and spend the night of his marriage there."

"And very handy," said John, "for there's a wedding-cake shop at the corner."

The King sighed again.

"Unhappily none survives. One hundred and fifty-five have undertaken the

adventure, and not a man of them but has either lost his wits or run for it."

"Well," said John, "I've been afraid of a great many men——"

"That's a poor confession for a soldier," put in the King.

"——when they all happened to come at me together. But I've never yet met the ghost that could frighten me; and if your Majesty will give me the latchkey I'll try my luck this very night."

It could not be done in this free and easy way; but at eight o'clock, after John had visited the palace and taken an oath in the Princess's presence (which was his first sight of her), he was driven down to the house beside the Lord Chamberlain, who admitted him to the black front hall, and, slamming the door upon him, scuttled out of the porch as quickly as possible and into his brougham.

John struck a match and, as he did so, heard the carriage roll away. The walls were bare, and the floor and great staircase ahead of him carpetless. As the match flickered out he caught a glimpse of a pair of feet moving up the stairs; that was all—only feet.

"I'll catch up with the calves on the landing, maybe," said he; and, striking another match, he followed them up.

The feet turned aside on the landing and led him into a room on the right. He paused on the threshold, drew a candle from his pocket, lit it, and stared about him. The room was of great size, bare and dusty, with crimson hangings, gilt panels, and one huge gilt chandelier, from which and from the ceiling and cornice long cobwebs trailed down like creeping plants. Beneath the chandelier a dark smear ran along the boards. The feet crossed it towards the fireplace, and as they did so, John saw them stained with blood. They reached the fireplace and vanished.

Scarcely had this happened before the end of the room opposite the window began to glow with an unearthly light. John, whose poverty had taught him to be economical, promptly blew out his candle. A moment later two men entered, bearing a coffin between them. They rested it upon the floor, and, seating themselves upon it, began to cast dice. "Your soul!"—"My soul!" they kept saying in hollow tones, according as they won or lost. At length one of them—a tall man in a powdered wig, with a face extraordinarily pale—flung a hand to his brow, rose and staggered from the room. The other sat waiting and twirling his black moustache, with an evil smile. John, who by this time had found a seat in a far corner, thought him the most poisonous-looking villain he had ever seen; but as the minutes passed and nothing happened, he turned his back to the light and pulled out a "Penny Dreadful." His literary taste was shocking, and when it came to romance he liked the incidents to follow one another with great rapidity.

He was interrupted by a blood-curdling groan, and the first ruffian broke into the room, dragging by its grey locks the body of an old man. A young girl followed, weeping and protesting, with dishevelled hair, and behind her entered a priest with a brazier full of glowing charcoal. The girl cast herself forward on the old man's body, but the two scoundrels dragged her from it by force. "The money!" demanded the dark one; and she drew from her bosom a small key and cast it at his feet. "My promise!" demanded the other, and seized her by the wrist as the priest stepped forward. "Quick! over this coffin—man and wife!" She wrenched her hand away and thrust him backward. The priest retreated to the brazier and drew out a red hot iron.

John thought it about time to interfere. "I beg your pardon," said he, stepping forward, "but may I take it that this is only your fun?"

"We are unhallowed souls," answered the dark man impressively, "who return to blight the living with the spectacle of our awful crimes."

"Meaning me?" asked John.

"Ay, sir; and to destroy you to-night if you contract not upon your soul to return with your bride and meet us here a twelvemonth hence."

"H'm!" said John to himself, "they are three to one; and, after all, it's what I came for. I suppose," he added aloud, "some form of contract is usual in these cases?"

The dark man drew out pen and parchment.

"Hold forth your hand," he commanded; and as John held it out, thinking he meant to shake it over the bargain, the fellow drove the pen into his wrist until the blood spurted. "Now sign!"

"Sign!" said the other villain.

"'Your soul!'—'My soul!'"

"Sign!" said the lady.

"Oh, very well, miss. If you're in the swindle too, my mind is easier," said John, and signed his name with a flourish. "But a bargain is a bargain, and what security have I for your part in it?"

"Our signature!" said the priest terribly, at the same moment pressing his branding iron into John's ankle. A smell of burnt cork arose as John stooped and clapped his hand over the scorched stocking. When he looked up again his visitors had vanished, and a moment later the strange light, too, died away.

But the coffin remained for evidence that he had not been dreaming. John lit a candle and examined it.

"Just the thing for me," he exclaimed, finding it to be a mere shell of pine boards, loosely nailed together and painted black. "I was beginning to shiver." He knocked the coffin to pieces, crammed them into the fireplace, and very soon had a grand fire blazing, before which

he sat and finished his "Penny Dreadful," and so dropped off into a sound sleep.

The Lord Chamberlain arrived early in the morning, and, finding him stretched there, at first broke into lamentations over the fate of yet another personable young man; but soon changed his tune when John sat up, and, rubbing his eyes, demanded to be told the time.

"But are you really alive? We must drive back and tell his Majesty at once!"

"Stay a moment," said John. "There's a brother of mine a lawyer in the city. He will be arriving at his office about this time, and you must drive me there, for I have a document here of a sort, and must have it stamped, to be on the safe side."

So into the city he was driven beside the Lord Chamberlain, and there had his leg stamped and filed for reference; and, having purchased another, was conveyed to the palace, where the King received him with open arms.

He was now a favoured guest at court, and had frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with the Princess, with whom he soon fell deeply in love. But as the months passed and the time drew near for their marriage, he grew silent and thoughtful, for he feared to expose her, even in his company, to the sights he had witnessed in the haunted house.

He thought and thought, until one fine afternoon he snapped his fingers suddenly, and after that went about whistling. A fortnight before the day fixed for the wedding he drove into the city again—but this time to the office of his other brother, the merchant.

"I want," he said, "a loan of a thousand pounds."

"Nothing easier," said his brother. "Here are eight hundred and fifty. Of the remainder I shall keep fifty as interest for the first year at 5 per cent., and the odd hundred should purchase a premium of insurance for two thousand pounds, which I will retain as security against accidents."

This seemed not only fair but brotherly. John pocketed his eight hundred and fifty pounds, shook his creditor affectionately by the hand, and hurried westward.

The marriage was celebrated with great pomp; and in the evening the King, who had been shedding tears at intervals throughout the ceremonies, accompanied his daughter to the haunted house. The Princess was pale. John, on the contrary, who sat facing her father in the State Coach, smiled with a cheerfulness which, in the circumstances, seemed a trifle under-bred. The wedding-guests followed in twenty-four chariots. Their cards of invitation had said "Two to five-thirty p.m.," and it was now eight o'clock; but they could not resist the temptation to see the last of "the poor dear thing," as they agreed to call the bride.

The King sat silent during the drive; he was preparing his farewell speech, which he meant to deliver in the porch. But arriving, and perceiving a crowd about it, and also (to his vast astonishment) a red baize carpet on the perron, and a butler bowing in the doorway with two footmen behind him, he coughed down his exordium, and led his daughter into the hall amid showers of rice and confetti. The bridegroom followed; and so did the wedding-guests, since no one opposed them.

The hall and staircase were decorated with palms and pot-plants, flags and emblems of Illyria, and in the great drawing-room—which they entered while John persuaded the King to a seat—they found many rows of morocco-covered chairs, a miniature stage with a drop representing the play-scene in *Hamlet*, a row of footlights, a boudoir grand piano, and a man seated at the keyboard whom they recognised as a performer in much demand at suburban dances.

The company had scarcely seated itself before a strange light began to illuminate that end of the room at which the stage stood, and immediately the curtain rose to the overture of M. Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfers*, the pianist continuing with great spirit until a round of applause greeted the entrance of the two spectral performers.

Its effect upon them was in the highest degree disconcerting. They set down the coffin, and after a brief and hurried conference in an undertone, the black-mustachioed ghost advanced to the footlights, singled out John from the audience, and with a terrific scowl demanded to know the reason of this extraordinary gathering.

"Come, come, my dear sir!" answered John. "Our contract, if you will study it, allows me to invite whom I choose;

it merely insists that my bride and I must be present, as you see we are. Pray go on with your part, and assure yourself it is of no use to try the high horse with me."

The dark ghost looked at his partner, who shuffled uneasily.

"I told you," said he, "we should have trouble with this fellow. I had a presentiment of it when he came to spend the night here without bringing a bull-dog. That frightening of the bull dog out of his wits has always been our most effective bit of business."

"He soon fell deeply in love."

Hereupon the dark ghost took another tone.

"Our fair but unfortunate victim has a sore throat to-night," he announced. "The performance is consequently postponed." And he seated himself sulkily upon the coffin, where the limelight-man from the wings promptly bathed him in a flood of the most beautiful rose-colour. "Oh, this is intolerable!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

"It is not first-rate, I agree," said John; "but such as it is, we had better go through with it. Should the company doubt its genuineness, I can go around afterwards and show the brand on the cork." Here he tapped the leg, which he had been careful to bring with him.

Before this evidence of contract the ghosts' resistance collapsed. They seated themselves on the coffin, and began the casting of dice; the performance proceeded, but in a half-hearted and perfunctory manner, notwithstanding the vivacious efforts of the limelight-man.

The tall ghost struck his brow and fled from the stage. There were cries of "Call him back!" But John explained that this was part of the drama, and no encores would be allowed; whereupon the audience fell to hissing the villain, who now sat alone with the most lifelike expression of malignity.

"Oh, hang it!" he expostulated after a while, "I am doing this under protest, and you need not make it worse for a fellow. I draw the line at hissing."

"It's the usual thing," explained John affably.

But when the ghostly lady walked on, and in the act of falling on her father's body was interrupted by the pianist, who handed up an immense bouquet, the performers held another hurried colloquy.

"Look here," said the dark-browed villain, stepping forward and addressing John, "what will you take to call it quits?"

"I'll take," said John, "the key which the lady has just handed you. And if the treasure is at all commensurate with the fuss you have been making about it, we'll let bygones be bygones."

"Well, it was;" and John, having counted it out behind the curtain, came forward and asked the pianist to play "God save the King"; and so, having bowed his guests to the door, took possession of the haunted house and lived in it many years with his bride, in high renown and prosperity.

THE SLEEP OF TIME.

BY CHRISTIAN BURKE.

TIME, having toil'd for long, lay down and slept,
And men, believing that he must have died,
With noiseless footsteps from his presence crept,
And spread the curious rumour far and wide;
And all the world stood still that summer day,
While some in bitter anguish moan'd and wept
Their constant grief, and some in garlands gay
With sated hearts an endless revel kept;
And nothing passed, nor changed, nor fairer grew,
And nothing that was wrong might be redressed,
Until an Angel, dropping from the blue,
Laid a strong hand upon the dreamer's breast,—
"Men are not ready yet, O Time," said he:
"Why hast Thou plunged them in Eternity?"

THE WOLF.

BY S. CARLETON

[ILLUSTRATION BY S. H. VEDDER.]

IF the air had not been December's, I would have said there was balm in it. Balm there was, to me, in the sight of the road before me. The first snow of winter had been falling for an hour or more, the barren hill was white with it. What wind there was, was behind me, and I stopped to look my fill.

The long slope stretched up till it met the sky, the softly rounded white of it melting into the grey clouds—the dove-clouds—that touched the summit, brooding, infinitely gentle. From my feet led the track, sheer white where old infrequent wheels had marked two channels for the snow to lie, in the middle a clear filmy brown, not the shadow of a colour but the light of one, and the grey and white and brown of it all was veiled and strange with the blue-grey mist of falling snow. So quiet, so kind it fell, I could not move for looking at it, though I was not half way home.

My eyes are not very good. I could not tell what made that brown light in the middle of the track till I was on it, and saw it was only grass standing above the snow—tall, thin, feathery autumn grass, dry and withered. It was so beautiful, I was sorry to walk on it.

I stood looking down at it, and then, because I had to get on, lifted my eyes to the sky-line. There was something black there, very big against the low sky; very swift too on its feet, for I had scarcely wondered what it was before it had come so close that I saw it was a man, a priest in his black soutane. I never saw any man who moved so fast without running. He was close to me, at my side, passing me even as I thought it.

"You are hurried, father," said I, meaning to be civil. "I see few people in my house, twelve miles from the settlement, and I had my curiosity to know where this strange priest was going. For he was a stranger."

"To the churchyard, my brother, to the churchyard," he answered in a chanting voice, yet not the chanting you hear in churches. He was past me as he spoke, five yards past me down the hill.

The churchyard! Yes, there was a burying. Young John Noel was dead this three days. I heard that in the village.

"This priest will be late," I thought, wondering why young John must have two priests to bury him. Father Moore was enough for every one else. And then I wondered why he had called me brother.

I turned to watch him down the hill, and saw what I had not seen before. The man was lame. His left foot hirpled, either in trick or infirmity. In the shallow snow his track lay black and uneven where the sound foot had taken the weight. I do not know why, but that black track had a desolate look on the white ground, and the black priest hurrying down the hill looked desolate too. There was something infinitely lone and infinitely pathetic in that scurrying figure, indistinct through the falling snow.

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I had grown chilled standing, and it made me shiver; or else it was the memory of the gaunt face, the eyes that did not look at me, the incredible swift lameness of the strange priest. However it was, virtue had gone from me. I went on to the top of the hill without much spirit, and into the woods. And in the woods the kindliness had gone from the snowfall. The familiar rocks and stumps were unfamiliar, threatening. Half a dozen times I wondered what a certain thing could be that crouched before me in the dusk, only to find it a rotten log, a boulder in the bare bushes. Whether I hurried faster than I knew for that unfriendliness around me, I did not trouble to think, but I was in a wringing sweat when I came out at my own clearing. As I crossed it to my door something startled me; what, I do not know. It was but a faint sound, far off, unknown, unrecognisable, but unpleasing. I forgot the door was latched, (I leave my house by the window when I go out for the day,) and pushed it sharply. It gave to my hand. It was no stranger inside at least. An old Indian sat by the smouldering fire, with my dog at his feet.

"Andrew!" said I. "Is anything wrong?" I had it always in my mind when he came unexpectedly that his wife might be dead. She had been smoking her pipe and dying this ten years back.

"I don' know." The old man smiled as he carefully shut and barred the door I had left ajar. "He want tobacco, so I come. You good man to me. You not home; I wait and make supper. My meat," he nodded proudly at the dull embers, and I saw he had an open pot on them with a hacked-off joint of moose meat. "I make him stew."

He had done the same thing before, a sort of tacit payment for the tobacco he wanted. I was glad to see him, for I was so hot and tired from my walk home that I knew I must be getting old very fast. It is not good to sit alone in a shack of a winter's night, and know you are getting old very fast.

When there was no more moose-meat we drew to the fire. Outside, the wind had risen, full of a queer wailing that sounded as bodily as the cry of a loon. I saw Andrew was not ready to start for home, though he had his hat on his head, and I realised I had not got out the tobacco. But when I put it on the table he let it lie.

"You keep me here to-night," he said, without a smile, almost anxiously. "Bad night to-night. Too long way home."

I was pleased enough, but I asked if the old woman would be lonely.

"He get tobacco to-morrow" (Andrew had but the masculine third person singular—and why have more, when that serves?) "Girl with him when I come. To-morrow . . ." he listened for an instant to the wind, stared into the fire, and threw so mighty a bark-covered log on it that the flames flew up the chimney.

"Red deer come back to this country," exclaimed he irrelevantly. "Come down from Maine. Wolves come back too, over the north ice. I s'pose smell 'em? I don' know."

I nodded. I knew both things, having nothing but such things to know in the corner of God's world I call my own.

Andrew filled his pipe. If I had not been used to him, I could never have seen his eyes were not on it, but on me.

"To-morrow," he harked back abruptly, "we go 'way. Break up here. Go down Lake Moown."

"Why?" I was astounded. He had not shifted camp for years.

"I say red deer back. Not good here any more."

"But——" I wondered for half a minute if he could be afraid of the few stray wolves which had certainly come, from heaven knew how far, the winter before. But I knew that was nonsense. It must be something about the deer. Who was I, to know what his mind got out of them?

"No good," he repeated; he lifted his long brown hand solemnly: "no good here. You come too."

I laughed. "I'm too old—Andrew, who was the strange priest I met to-day crossing the upland farm?"

"Father Moore—no? Father Underhill?"

"No. Thin, tired looking, lame."

"Lame? Drag leg? Hurry?" I had never seen him so excited, never seen him stop in full career as now. "I don' know,"—it was a different man speaking,—"strange priest, not belong here. You come Lake Moown with me."

"Tell me about the priest first,"—though I knew it was useless as I said it.

He spat into the fire. "Lame dog,

lame woman, lame priest—all no good!" said he. "What time late you sit up here?"

Not late that night assuredly. I was more tired than I wanted to own. But long after I had gone to my bunk in the corner, I saw Andrew's wrinkled face alert and listening in the firelight. He played with something in his hand, and I knew there was that in his mind that he would not say. The wind had died away, there was no more loon calling, or whatever it was. I fell to sleep to the sound of the fire and the soft pat of snow against the window. But the straight old figure in my chair sat rigid—rigid.

I opened my eyes to broad dull daylight. Andrew and the tobacco were gone. But on the table was something I did not see till I was setting my breakfast there. Three bits of twig—two uprights and a cross-piece, a lake shore pebble, a bit of charred wood. I supposed it was something about coming back from Lake Moown to sit by my fire again, and I swept the picture-writing away as I put down my teapot. Afterwards I was glad.

I began to wonder if it would ever stop snowing. Andrew's track from my door was filled up already. I sat down to my fly-tying and my books, with a pipe in my mouth and an old tune at my heart, when I heard a hare shriek out. I will have no traps on my grant—a beggarly hundred acres, not cleared and never will be: I have no farmer blood—and for a moment I distrusted Andrew. I put on my boots and went out.

The dog plumped into the woods ahead of me, and came back. The hare shrieked again, and was cut off in the middle.

"Indian is Indian," said I savagely. "Andrew!" but no one answered. The dog fell behind me, treading in my steps.

In the thick spruces there was nothing, nothing in the opener hardwood, till I came out on a clear place under a big tree, with the snow falling over into my boot-legs. There, stooping in the snow with his back to me, was a man—the priest of yesterday. Priest or no priest, I would not have it, and I said so.

He smiled tightly, his soutane gathered up around him.

"I do not snare," said he. "Look!" he moved aside, and I saw the bloody snow, the dead hare. "Something must have killed it and been frightened away. It is very odd." He looked round him, as I did, for the fox or wild-cat tracks that were not there. Except for my boot-prints from my side and his uneven track from his there was not a mark on the snow. It might have been a wild cat that jumped to some tree, but, even so, it was queer.

"Very odd," he said again. "Will you have the hare?"

I shook my head. I had no fancy for it.

"It is good meat."

I had turned to see where my dog had gone, but I looked back at the sound of his voice,—and was ashamed. Pinched, tired, bedraggled, he held up the hare; and his eyes were sharp with hunger.

I looked for no more phantom tracks, I forgot he had sinned about the hare. I was ashamed that I, well fed, had shamed him, empty, by wondering foolishly about wild cats. Yet, even so, I had less fancy for that hare than ever.

"Let it be," said I, "I have better meat, and I suppose the beasts are hungry as well as we. If you are not hurried, come in and have a bite with me. I see few people out here. You would do me a kindness."

A very strange look came on his face. "A kindness?" he said. "I do a kindness!"

He sounded so taken aback that I wondered if he were not a little mad. I do not like madmen, but I could not turn round on him.

"You are off the track to anywhere," I explained. "There are no settlements for a hundred miles back of me. If you come in I will give you your bearings."

"Off the track," he repeated, almost joyfully. "Yes, yes. But I am very strong: I suppose," his voice dragged into a whisper, "I shall not be able to help getting back to a settlement again. But"—he looked at me for the first time, with considering eyes like a dog's, only more afraid, less gentle—"you are a good man, brother," he said: "I will come."

He cast a shuddering glance at the hare, and threw it behind him. As I turned to go he drifted lamely after me, just as a homeless dog does, half hope, half terrified suspicion. But I fancied he laid a greedy eye at the bloody hare after he had turned away from it. Somehow he was not a comfortable companion, and I was sorry I had no lunatic asylum. I whistled for my dog, but he had run home. He liked neither snow nor strangers. I saw his

great square head in my bed as I let the priest in, and I knew he was annoyed. Dogs are funny things

Mad or sane, that priest ate ravenously. When he had finished, his eyes were steadier, though he started frightfully when I dropped some firewood—started toward the door.

"Were you in time for the funeral yesterday, father?" I said, to put him at his ease; but at first he did not answer.

"I turned back," he said at last, in the chanting voice of yesterday. "You live alone, brother? Alone like me, in the wilderness?"

I said yes. I supposed he was one of the Indian priests, who live alone indeed. He was no town priest, for his nails were worn to the quick.

"You should bar your door at night," he said slowly, as if it were a distasteful duty. "These woods are not—not as they were."

Here was another warning, the second in twenty-four hours. I forgot about his being crazy.

"I always bar it," I answered, shortly enough. I was tired of these child's terrors, all the more that I myself had felt evil in the familiar woods only yesterday.

"Do more," said the priest. He stood up, a taller man than I had thought him, a gaunt, hunted looking man, in his shabby black. "Do more. After nightfall keep your door shut, even to knocking; do not open it for any calling. The place is a bad place, and treachery——" He stopped, looked at the table, pointed at something. "Would you mind," said he, "turning down that loaf? It is not—not true."

I saw the loaf bottom-up on the platter, and remembered. It is an old custom of silent warning that the stranger in the house is a traitor. But I had no one to warn. I laughed, and turned the loaf.

"Of course there is no traitor," I said.

If ever I saw gratitude, it was in his eyes; yet he spoke peevishly. "Not now; but there might be. And so I say to you, after nightfall do not open your door—till the Indians come back."

Then he was an Indian priest. I wondered why Andrew had lied about him.

"What is this thing" (I was impatient) "that you and they are afraid of? Lock out there." I opened the door—for the poor priest, to be truthful, was not savoury—and pointed to the quiet clearing, the soft falling snow, the fringe of spruces that were the vanguard of the woods. "Look there, and tell me what there is in my own woods that has not been there these twelve years past? Yet first an Indian comes with hints and warnings, and then you."

"What warnings?" he cried. "The Indian's, I mean. What warnings?"

"I am sure I do not know." I was thoroughly out of temper; I was not always a quiet old man in a lonely shack. "Something about the red deer coming back, and the place being bad."

"That is nonsense—about the red deer," said the priest, not in the least as if he meant it.

"Nonsense or not, it seems to have sent the Indians away." I could not help sounding dry. I hate these silly mysteries.

He turned his back to me, and began to prowl about the room. I had opened my mouth to speak when he forestalled me.

"You have been kind to an outcast priest," said he, plainly. "I tell you in return to go away, I tell you earnestly. Or else I ask you to promise me that for no reason will you leave your house after dark, or your door on the latch, till the Indians come ba——" He stopped in the middle of a word, the middle of a step, his lame leg held up drolly. "What is that?"

It was more like the howl of a wild beast than a question, and I spun round pretty sharply. The man was crazier than I liked.

"That rubbish of twigs and stones? The Indian left them. They mean something about his coming back, I suppose."

I could not see what he was making such a fuss about. He stood in that silly, arrested attitude, and his lips had drawn back from his teeth in a kind of snarl. I stooped for the things, and it was exactly as if he snapped at me.

"Let them be. I—I have no fancy for them. They are a heathen charm." He backed away from them, drew close to the open door, and stood with a working face: the saddest sight of fierce and weary ruin, of effort to speak kindly, that ever I saw.

"They're just a message," I said.

"That you do not understand." He held

"It was all veiled and strange with the blue-grey mist of falling snow

up his hand for silence, more priest and less madman than I had yet seen him. "I will tell you what they mean. The twigs, two uprights and a cross-piece, mean to keep your door shut; the stone is—the stone does not matter, call it a stranger; the charcoal"—for all the effort he was making his hand fell, and I thought he trembled—"the charcoal——"

I stooped mechanically to put the things as he described them, as Andrew had left them; but his cry checked me.

"Let the cruel things be! The charcoal means the unlucky, the burned out souls whose bodies live accursed. No, I will not touch them either. But do you lay them as you found them, night after night at your door, and—and——" (he was fairly grinding his teeth with the effort—even an outcast priest may feel shame at believing in heathenry) "and the unlucky, the unhappy, must pass by."

I do not know why such pity came on me, except that it is not right to see into the soul of any man, and I knew the priest must be banned, and thought Andrew had meant to warn me against him. I took the things, twigs, stone and charcoal, and threw them into the fire.

"I'd sooner they came in," I said.

But the strange priest gave me a look of terror, of agony. I thought he wrung his hands, but I could not tell. As if I had struck him, he was over my threshold and scurrying away with his swift lameness into the woods and the thin falling snow. He went the way we had come in the morning, the way of the dead hare. I could not help wondering if he would take it with him if it were still there. I was sorry I had not asked him where he was going, sorrier I had not filled his pockets with food. I turned to put away my map of the district, and it was gone. He must have moved more silently than a wolf to have stolen it, but stolen it was. I could not grudge it, if I would rather have given it. I went to the bunk to pull out my sulky dog, and stood amazed. Those books he which say dogs do not sweat.

"The priest certainly had a bad smell," I said to him, "but nothing to cause all this fuss. Come out!"

But he only crawled abjectly to the fire, and presently lifted his great head and howled.

"Snow or no snow, priest or no priest," said I, "we will go out to get rid of these vapours", for I had not felt much happier with my guest than the dog.

When we came back we had forgotten him, or—why should I lie?—the dog had. I could not forget his lameness, his poor, fierce, hungry face. I said a prayer in my bed that night (I know it is not a devout practice, but if the mind kneels I hold the body does not matter, and my mind has been kneeling for twenty years). "For all that are in agony and have none to pray for them, I beseech Thee, O God." And I meant the priest—as well as some others. But, however it was, I heard—I mean I saw—no more of him. I had never heard of him so much as his name.

Christmas passed. In February I went down to the village, and there I heard what put the faint memory of the lame man out of my head. The wolves who had followed the red deer were killing, not deer in the woods, but children in the settlements. The village talked of packs of wolves, and heaven knew how many children. I thought if it came to bare truth there might have been three children eaten, instead of the thirty rumour made them, and that for the fabled pack there probably stood two or three brutes with a taste for human flesh and a distaste for the hard running of pulling down a deer. And before I left the village I met a man who told the plain tale.

There had been ten children killed or carried off, but there had been no pack of wolves concerned, nor even three, nor two. One lame wolf's track led from each robbed house, only to disappear on some high road. More than that, the few wolves in the woods seemed to fear and shun the lonely murderer—were against him as much as the men who meant to hunt him down.

It was a queer story; I hardly thought it held water, though the man who told it was no romance-maker. I left him, and went home over the hard shining of the crusted snow, wondering why the good God, if He had not meant His children to kill, should have made the winter so long and hard.

Yellow shafts of low sunlight pierced the woods as I threaded them, and if they had not made it plain that there was nothing abroad, I should have thought I heard something padding in the underbrush. But I saw nothing till I came out

on my own clearing; and there I jerked up with surprise.

The lame priest stood with his back to my window—stood on a patch of tramped and bloody snow.

"Will you never learn sense?" he whined at me. "This is no winter to go out and leave your window unfastened. If I had not happened by, your dog would be dead."

I stared at him. I always left the window ajar for the dog to go out and in.

"I came by," said the priest, as if he were passing every day, "and found your dog out here with three wolves on him. I—I beat them off." He might speak calmly, but he wiped the sweat from his face. "I put him in the window. He is only torn."

"But you——" my wits came back to me. I thanked him as a man does who has only a dumb beast to cherish. "Why did you not go in too? You must be frozen."

He shook his head. "The dog is afraid of me: you saw that," he said simply. "He was better alone. Besides, I had my hands full at the time."

"Are you hurt?" I would have felt his ragged clothes, but he flinched away from me.

"The wolves were afraid too;" he gave a short laugh. "And now I must go. Only be careful. For all you knew there might have been wolves beside you as you came. And you had no gun."

I knew now why he neither looked cold nor like a man who has been waiting. He had made the window safe for the dog inside, and run through the woods to guard me. I was full of wonder at the strangeness of him, and the absurd gratitude; I forgot—or rather I did not speak of—the stolen map. I begged him to come in for the night. But he cut me off in the middle.

"I am going a long way. No, I will not take a gun. I have no fear."

"These wolves are too much," I said angrily. "They told me in the village that a lame one had been harrying the settlements. I mean a wolf"—not for worlds would I have said anything about lameness if I had remembered his.

"Do they say that?" he asked, his gaunt and furrowed face without expression. "Oh, you need not mind me! It is no secret that I—I too am lame. Are they sure?"

"Sure enough to mean to kill him." Somehow my tongue faltered over it.

"So they ought," said he in his throat. "But—I doubt if they can!" He straightened himself, and looked at the sun with a queer face. "I must be going. You need not thank me,—except, if there comes one at nightfall, do not, for my memory, let him in. Good night, brother."

And, "Good night, brother," said I.

He turned and drifted lamely out of the clearing. He was out of my sight as quickly as if he had gone into the ground. It was true about the wolves: there were their three tracks, and the priest's tracks running to the place where they had my dog down. If, remembering the hare, I had had other thoughts, I was ashamed of them. I was sorry I had not asked in the village about this strange man who beat off wolves with a stick; but I had, unfortunately, not known it in the village.

I was to know. Oh, I was to know!

It might have been a month after, anyhow it was near sunset of a bitter day, when I saw the lame priest again.

Lame indeed. Bent double, as if with agony, limping horribly, the sweat on his white face, he stumbled to my door. His hand was at his side, there was a dry bloodstain round his mouth; but even while he had to lean against the doorpost he would not let me within arm-reach of him, but edged away.

"Come in, man," I said, "come in. You—are you hurt?" I thought I saw blood on his soutane, that was in flinders.

He shook his head. Like a man whose minutes are numbered he looked at the sun, and, like a man whose minutes are numbered, could not hurry his speech.

"Not I," he said at last. "But there is a poor beast out there," nodding vaguely, "a—a dog, that has been wounded. I—I want some rags to tie up the wound, a blanket to put over him. I cannot leave him in his—his last hour."

"You can't go, I'll put him out of his misery, that will be better than blankets."

"It might," said he, "it might, if you could. But I must go."

I said I would go too. But at that he seemed to lose all control of himself, and snarled out at me: "Stay at home, I will not have you! Hurry! Get me the things."

His eyes—and on my soul I thought death was glazing them—were on the sinking sun when I came out again, and

for the first time he did not edge away from me. I should have known without telling that he had been caring for some animal by the smell of his clothes.

"My brother that I have treated brotherly, as you me," he said, "whether I come back this night or not, keep your door shut. Do not come out—*if I had strength to kneel I would kneel to you*—for any calling. And I—I that ask you have loved you well, I have tried to serve you, except" (he had no pause, no awkwardness) "in the matter of that map, but you had burnt the heathen charm, and I had to find a way to keep far off from you. I am—I am a driven man."

"There will be no calling," said I, puzzled and despairing, "there has been none of that loon-crying or whatever it was since the night I first met you. If you treat me as a brother, come back to my house and sleep. I will not hurt your wounded dog,"—though even then I knew it was no dog.

"I treat you as I know best," he answered passionately. "But if in the morning I do not come . . ." He seized the blanket, the rags, and bounded from me in the last rays of sunlight, dragging his burden in the snow. As he vanished, with his swift incredible lameness, his voice came back high and shrill: "If I do not come in the morning, come out and give—give my dog burial. For the love of—" he was screaming—"for the love I bore you—Christian burial!"

If I had not stayed to shut the door I should not have lost him. Until dark I called, I beat every inch of cover. All the time I had a feeling that he was near and evading me, and at last I stopped looking for him. For all I knew he might have a camp somewhere; and, camp or none, he had said pretty plainly he did not want me. I went home, angry and baffled.

It was a freezing night. The very moon looked fierce with cold. The shack snapped with frost as I sat down to supper. I could not eat for the thought of the poor soul outside. And as I sat I heard a sound. A soft imploring call, the same, only nearer and more insistent, as the cry on the wind the night after I first saw the priest. I was at the door, when something stopped me. I do not exaggerate when I say the mad priest's voice was in my ears.

"If there comes one to your door after nightfall, do not let him in. Do not open for any crying. *If I had strength to kneel I would kneel to you.*"

I do not think any pen on earth could put down the entreaty of that miserable voice; but even remembering it I would have disregarded it if, before I could so much as draw breath, that soft calling had not broken into a great raveming howl, bestial, full of malice. For a moment I thought the priest had come back raving mad; I thought silly thoughts of my cellar and my medicine chest, but as I turned for my knitted sash to tie him with, the horrid howl came again, and I knew it was no man, but a beast. Or I think that is a lie: I knew nothing, except that outside was something more horrible than I had ever dreamed of, and that I could not open my door.

I did go to the window; I put a light there for the priest to see, if he came; but I did no more. That very day I had said "there will be no more calling," and here in my sober senses stood and sweated because my words were turned into a lie.

There seemed to be two voices, yet I knew it was but one. First would come the soft wailing, with the strange drawing in it. There was more terror for me in that than in the furious snarl to which it always changed, for while it was imploring it was all I could do not to let in the one who cried out there. Just as I could withstand no longer, the raving malice of the second cry would stop me short. It was as if one called and one forbade me. But I knew there were no two things outside.

I may as well set down my shame and be done. I was afraid. I stood holding my frantic dog, and dared not look at the unshuttered window, black and shining like new ice in the lamplight, lest I should see I knew not what inhuman face looking at me through the frail pane. If I had had the heathen charm I should have fallen to the cowardice of using it.

It may have been ten minutes that I stood with frozen blood. All I am sure of is that I came to my senses with a great start, remembering the defenceless priest outside. I shut up my dog, took my gun, opened my door in a fury, and—did not shoot.

Not ten yards from me a wolf crouched in the snow, a dark and lonely thing. My gun was in my shoulder, but as he came at me the sound that broke from his throat loosened my arm. It was

human: there is no other word for it. As I stood sick and stupid the poor brute stopped his rush with a great slither in the snow that was black with his blood in the moonlight, and ran; ran terribly, lamely, from my sight. But not before I had seen a wide white bandage bound round his grey-black back and breast.

"The priest's dog!" I said. I thought a hundred things—and dared not meddle with what I did not understand.

I searched as best I might for what I knew I should not find; searched till the dawn broke in a lurid sky; and under that crimson light I found the man I had called brother, on the crimson snow. And as I hope to die in a house and in my bed, my rags I gave for the dying beast were round his breast, my blanket huddled at his hand. But his face, as I looked on him, I should not have known, for it was young. I put down my loaded gun, that I was glad was loaded still, and I carried the dead home. I saw no wounded wolf, nor the trace of one, except the long track from my door to the priest's body, and that was marked by neither teeth nor claws but, under my rags, with bullets.

Well, he had his Christian burial! Though Father Moore, good smooth man, would not hear my tale.

The dead priest had been outcast by his own will, not the Church's, had roamed the country for a thousand miles, a thing afraid and a thing of fear. And now some one had killed him, perhaps by mistake.

"Who knows?" finished Father Moore softly. "Who knows? But I will have no hue and cry made about it. He was once, at least, a servant of God, and these——" he glanced at the queer-looking bullets that had fallen from the dead man's side as I made him ready for burial. "I will encourage no senseless superstition in my people by trying to trace these. Especially. . . ." but he did not finish.

So we dug the priest's grave, taking turn by turn, for we are not young, and his brother in God buried him. What either of us thought about the whole matter we did not say.

But the very day after, while the frozen mound of consecrated earth was raw in the sunshine, Andrew walked in at my door.

"We come back," said he. "All good here now. Lame wolf dead. Shoot him after dark, silver bullet. • Wēguladi-mooch Bochtüsüm!"

He said never a word about the new grave. And neither did I.

• Evilspirit wolf.

A CAROL OF THE SEA.

BY FRANK SAVILE.

THE surges moan beneath the keel,
Their cadences, now soft, now loud,
Throb out in murmurous appeal
The antiphon of sheet and shroud;
Faint chords, O Lord, that lift to Thee
The voice of Thine eternal Sea.

For we are far from choir and fane
Who serve the temple of Thy sky.
Yet we have heard the hurricane
Declare Thine awful majesty,
And learnt the Trade Wind lilt that sighs
In concords won from Paradise.

Though we have met Thy mercies mute
(Hark! where the tolling fog-bell swings)
Yet we have marked Thy reed and lute
In falling wave and wind-pluckt strings.
Take then, O Lord, from this Thy sea
Our hymn to Thy Nativity.

THE DREAM-LADY.

BY NETTA SYRETT.

Mr. George Alexander invited the Playgoers' Club to elect a Reading Committee, to whom plays should be submitted, the best modern English play to be chosen. Mr. Alexander undertook to produce the play at the St. James's Theatre, and Mr. Tree promised to act with him. In all four hundred plays were received. The successful competitor was Miss Netta Syrett, another of whose plays appears in the following pages.

SCENE: *The Garden of the King's Palace.*

Enter the KING, QUEEN, *Ladies of the Court, and Pages.*

KING (*testily, in loud aside to* QUEEN). Dismiss these people, my dear! Send them away! Get rid of them. What's the good of being a king, I should like to know, if one can't have a moment's peace from morning till night? Here I am, followed about incessantly by a crowd of bowing, scraping, grinning——

QUEEN (*rising hastily*). Ladies! My lords! You are permitted to leave us.

(*Exeunt Attendants, bowing.*)

(*Turning angrily to* KING) Really, my love! Have you *no* sense of your position? Do you want every one to know you weren't *born* a king? You show your feelings like any ordinary commoner, instead of remembering that a king *has* no feelings. (*Begins to cry.*)

KING (*in murmured aside*). Ah! the exclusive possession of a Queen, I see! Come, my dear, I implore you not to cry. It exasperates me! It always did, if you remember, in the good old days before I was a king——

QUEEN. There you are again! Always harping on the same string. You take a pleasure in——

KING (*tearing his hair*): Oh, for heaven's sake, my love, be reasonable! Was ever a poor, inoffensive, mild-tempered man—I mean king—so worried. As though a fantastic, capricious, unreasonable daughter wasn't trial enough, his wife must needs whine and cry, and refuse to listen when he wants to tell her of an offer of marriage he has received for the unworthy girl! A really excellent offer! An offer which——

QUEEN (*excitedly*). What? What did you say? Why didn't you tell me so before? Who is he? Has he seen her? The dear child!—how delighted I am! But no wonder. With her beauty and her accomplishment——

KING (*drily*): And her ridiculous, nonsensical notions.

QUEEN (*again on verge of tears*): You never appreciated the child! You haven't the ordinary feelings of a father.

KING: A king, my love, if you remember, *has* no feelings.

QUEEN: That is so like you: taking up my lightest word. But why don't you go on? Who is Fiammetta's suitor?

KING (*complacently*). The Prince of Goldacres, my love.

QUEEN (*rapturously*): The Prince——

KING: Send for Fiammetta.

QUEEN (*clapping her hands, to Page who appears*): Go, tell the Princess we await her here. (*To* KING) The Prince of Goldacres? My love, what an honour! And we thought the Princess of Floramia had done well. Why, *she* has only twenty pages-in-waiting! Fiammetta can have forty at least, and jewelled trappings to her horses. Turquoise and gold would be charming. Or pearls, perhaps? And then——

KING (*grimly*): Not quite so fast, my love. There are difficulties. Your daughter has been very foolishly brought up. Her education was left to you, remember. Why, the girl scribbles poetry, I believe. *Anything* may be expected from a girl who scribbles poetry.

QUEEN: Nonsense! Hush! here she comes.

The PRINCESS *enters, followed by two pages. She kisses the hands of* KING *and* QUEEN. *Pages withdraw.*

KING (*in pompous tone*): Fiammetta, we have summoned you into our august presence to impart to you a matter of deep moment——

QUEEN (*interrupting*): Oh, my darling child! A suitor! Come and kiss your mother. (KING *leans back with shrug of despair.*) And can you guess who comes to woo? The Prince of Goldacres, my daughter! Oh, Fiammetta, what a happy, grateful girl you ought to be!—that he, so handsome, so rich, so powerful——

PRINCESS (*slowly*): Yes, he is handsome. I have seen his picture. Rich?

QUEEN: Beyond all dreams. Child, your coach shall be of gold! You shall have milk-white horses and trappings jewel-set. Pearls for your hair, and——

PRINCESS (*dreamily*): Gold and jewels — yes. But has he seen the Dream-lady?

KING: Has he seen—*what*?

PRINCESS: The Dream-lady. (*Turning to her mother reproachfully*) Have you forgotten, mother? Long ago I said the Prince I marry must have seen the Dream-lady.

QUEEN (*half aloud*): I thought that childish nonsense was outgrown!

KING (*choking with rage*): What! What is this? What does she mean? Heaven send me patience! Speak, girl! the Dream-lady? Who is this "Dream-lady"?

PRINCESS (*shaking her head*): Ah! I don't know. Sometimes she comes at dawn, just when the birds are waking. Sometimes I find her in the forest, standing waist-deep in fern under the branching trees. Sometimes for days I cannot find her, and then I am unhappy, for I cannot make my poems. (*While the* PRINCESS *is speaking, the* QUEEN, *who list ns intently, is visibly moved.*) My poems never come without the Dream-lady!

KING: The girl is mad! (*Controlling himself with difficulty*) Tell me, daughter, does any one but you see this—this *Dream-lady*?

PRINCESS: Oh yes!

QUEEN (*gently*): Who, then, my daughter?

PRINCESS: My little brother Astorre, and my sister Amelotte.

KING: Baby children!

QUEEN: Who else?

PRINCESS: There was the minstrel who came the other evening to the palace gates. Before the servants drove him from the door I talked to him. He too had seen the Dream-lady.

KING: A tattered beggar!

PRINCESS: He sang more beautifully than words can tell.

KING (*still controlling his rage*): Go on. Who else?

PRINCESS: The other day, when I was riding through the city streets, a girl sat spinning at an open door, and as I passed she smiled. I stopped, and talked to her. She said the morrow was her wedding-day; and then she smiled again for happiness. She too had seen the Dream-lady. Then *all* the children, even in the dirtiest streets——

KING: Did ever a poor patient king and father listen to such stuff? The children in the streets! A beggarly musician! A woman at a cottage door! Oh! the girl is mad. Mad! (*Turning fiercely to* PRINCESS) Do you suppose *I* ever saw this Dream-lady?

PRINCESS (*decidedly*): Oh no!

KING: Or the Lord High Chancellor, or the Gold-Stick-in-Waiting, or the Ladies of the Bed-chamber, or—or *any* of the people of the Court?

PRINCESS: Oh no!

KING: Well, then, let me hear no more nonsense. The Prince arrives to-day. Receive him graciously, and in the name of common sense no talk of Dream-ladies and moonshine! (*He rises angrily and strides off grumbling.*) Whatever the princesses of the present age are coming to passes my poor wit! If I had my way, I'd lock them all up in enchanted towers, as they did in the good old days. And even then the Prince always came and let them out!

PRINCESS (*turning to her mother*): Mother! did *you* never see the Dream-lady?

QUEEN (*moved*): I—I don't know, my child. Perhaps. It is so long ago. But as you talked——

PRINCESS (*eagerly*): Oh, mother! When? When?

QUEEN (*wiping her eyes*): It is all dim and confused. But it was long ago. Your father was better-tempered then, and handsome. And I was young—as young as you.

PRINCESS (*clapping her hands*): Oh, then, mother, you will understand! Only the nicest people see the Dream-lady! That is why, unless the Prince——

QUEEN (*shaking her head*): Ah, yes, my daughter, but we must be wise. The Dream-lady brings neither gold nor land, and after all——

(*They go out, the* QUEEN *with her arm round the* PRINCESS, *who shakes her head as though unconvinced.*)

Enter the two royal children, ASTORRE *and* AMELOTTE, *followed by Attendants, who group themselves* L, *while the children run across grass* R.

AMELOTTE: Let us sit here, and finish the daisy chains. (*Dividing the flowers*). There's some for you, and some for me.

ASTORRE: We'll give this very long one to the Prince who came to day. Shall we?

AMELOTTE: Yes, and then——

ASTORRE (*delightedly*): The Dream-lady! Look!—the Dream-lady!

(*The children throw their daisies on the grass and run to meet the* DREAM-LADY, *who enters* L. *She is in white, and crowned with daisies. To the Attendants she is invisible.*)

AMELOTTE (*indignantly turning to Attendants, who do not move*): Nanina! Angelo! Stand up! Don't you see the Dream lady?

(*The Attendants look round, nod, laugh, and turn again to their embroidery-frames. The children, puzzled, look from them to the* DREAM-LADY.)

PAGE: What does she mean?

NANINA: Oh, it's a game they play. They say a certain "Dream lady" is with them. They are strange children, their heads stuffed full of fairy nonsense. Give me a skein of silk, Denise. Not that! The rosy one.

DREAM-LADY (*to children*): Never mind! They do not see me.

ASTORRE: Not see you? Why, you are *here*!

DREAM-LADY (*smiling*): But not for them.

AMELOTTE: Did they ever see you?

DREAM-LADY: Perhaps—long ago.

ASTORRE: When they were little girls?

DREAM-LADY (*laughing*): Yes, when they were little girls. What are you doing? Making daisy chains? Well, I will help you. (*She sits on the grass with the children and weaves the flowers.*)

AMELOTTE (*coaxingly*): Tell us a story!

ASTORRE: No, tell us where you've been to-day.

DREAM-LADY: Oh, to so many places! First, before dawn, I wandered through the meadows in the starlight, and saw the fairies dancing.

AMELOTTE: Did the queen dance? Show us how she danced.

DREAM-LADY: Well, you must help me, then, and be the little elves.

(*Music. The* DREAM-LADY *dances, and presently the children also dance round her.*)

DREAM-LADY (*laughing*): So! (*They stop and seat themselves again on the grass.*)

ASTORRE: And then where did you go?

DREAM-LADY: Then I went through the forest.

AMELOTTE: Oh! did you see my dolly? The other day I lost her in the forest.

DREAM-LADY (*mysteriously*): Yes, I saw her. But she's changed into a fairy.

THE CHILDREN: A fairy!

DREAM-LADY: I saw her driving into Fairy-land. She had a little coach made of a hazel-nut, and two brown dormice drew the coach.

AMELOTTE: What was she dressed in?

DREAM-LADY: A daisy had lent her its fringed petticoat, tipped with rosy pink.

ASTORRE: And on her head?

DREAM-LADY: She wore its crown of gold.

ASTORRE: And on her feet?

DREAM-LADY: Little silky shoes, made of its green leaves.

AMELOTTE (*clapping her hands*): And she has gone to Fairy-land? Will she come back again?

DREAM-LADY: Yes, because she heard you crying for her. But remember, she is turned into a daisy.

ASTORRE: How shall we know she is our dolly, then?

DREAM-LADY: Come here, and I will tell you.

(*The children lean against her, while she recites the following.*)

Down by the river, where green grows the grass,
Under the shining stars, fairy-folk pass,
Fairies from Dream-land come trooping that way,
And there, by the river, your dolly will stay.

Under the shining stars all the night long
The fairies come flocking with laughter and song,
Hastening to Fairy-land, ere break of day,
But there, in the green grass, your dolly will stay

She is the whitest of all the white daisies,
Brightest of all is the gold crown she raises,
Rosiest pink is the frill to her gown
When you have found her, children, kneel down.

Kneel down beside her, and tell her you know
That she is a fairy, and say she may go
Back to her Fairy land happy and gay,
Kiss her and thank her, but don't make her stay.

(*The children sink to sleep.* DREAM-LADY *rises, and says last verse sadly.*)

Don't make her stay in this dull world of ours,
Let her go back to the undying flowers
Of that magic land of whose starlight and streams
Mortals catch but a glimpse—through the "Lady of Dreams"

(*The* DREAM-LADY *goes out, finger on lip, passing unseen before the group of Attendants, before whom she pauses a moment, listening to their talk.*)

NANINA (*turning*): See! they are asleep. Come, Princess! (*She rouses the children.*)

DENISE (*incredulously*): You *do* not think she will refuse the Prince's hand?

NANINA (*shrugging her shoulders*): Who knows? Her folly has no bounds.

DENISE: And such a Prince!

NANINA: Handsome!

DENISE: Young.

NANINA: Above all—rich.

DENISE: Ah yes! so rich. Life holds no gift so great as gold.

NANINA (*smiling*): What does our song say? (*Sings.*)

Life is a toy with which we play
A little while—a summer's day
Since life's a toy howe'er it be,
None but a gilded toy for me!

Love is a toy whose colours die,
Fame but a bubble blown on high.
Since life's a toy howe'er it be,
None but a gilded toy for me!

(*The other Attendants take up the refrain, and the song ends in a burst of laughter.*)

ASTORRE (*rubbing his eyes*): Let us go and look for the "whitest of all the white daisies."

AMELOTTE: Has the Dream-lady gone?

NANINA (*sharply, as they go out*): Nonsense, Princess! There *is* no Dream-lady.

Enter the PRINCE OF GOLDACRES *with the* KING *and* QUEEN.

KING: Well, Prince, you have seen our daughter. How does your wooing prosper?

PRINCE (*shrugging his shoulders*): Sire, — indifferently. The Princess, indeed, is all my fancy painted. Beautiful, accomplished, gracious—she would prove a queen of whom I should be proud. Well, sire, I urged my suit—a suit not all unworthy, as I think. But when I laid my crown, my fortune, at her feet, she made but one reply. She talked about a certain Dream lady ——

QUEEN: Whom you have never seen?

PRINCE (*laughing*): Madam, I care to see no dream ladies!

KING: The Prince prefers them flesh and blood, like a wise man.

PRINCE (*still laughing*): Sire, you are right. Bright eyes, the red wine in the cup, the rousing horn through all the forest glades,—these make the joy of life. Dreams, and dream-ladies, I'm content to leave to the world's dreamers.

KING: Well spoken, Prince! Wife, here is a son for us. Fiammetta must be brought to reason. (*Impatiently*) You see, my love, she must be brought to reason?

QUEEN (*with a start*): Oh yes! Yes, you are right. In time we are all brought to reason.

KING: This nonsense must be stopped, put an end to, settled once for all! This "Dream-lady" is becoming an intolerable nuisance! To prove the calmness of my temper, Prince, to prove the fair and reasonable view I always take of things, I caused inquiry to be made, and summoned all who babbled of this thing.

PRINCE (*smiling*): And the result?

KING: Oh, I have just dismissed a crowd of beggars, children, silly young maids, mooning poets, and the like.

PRINCE: All telling the same tale?

KING: No! not even that. They could not keep even the same foolish story. (*To* QUEEN) What was the madness that they talked, my love? I had not patience to hear half they said.

QUEEN: To the old crippled wife she came with poppies in her hand. The young bride saw her crowned with roses. As for the children——

KING: Ah! that reminds me. Our children, as I think, have heard the common talk. This must be stopped! I am a plain king—there's no nonsense about me. There shall be none about my court.

QUEEN: Here come the children.

(*Enter the little Prince and Princess, with* FIAMMETTA *and Attendants.* KING *and* QUEEN *seat themselves. Children kiss their hands. The* PRINCE *bows before* FIAMMETTA, *and they stand talking together.*)

KING (*pompously*): Now, my children: I am told you think a certain lady comes and talks with you——

AMELOTTE: She *does* come. She is the Dream-lady.

ASTORRE: She told us where to find our dolly, and we've found her! Only she's a daisy now.

AMELOTTE: No, by this time she's a fairy. We told her to go back to Fairy-land.

FIAMMETTA (*who with the* PRINCE *stands listening*): What did the Dream-lady say?

AMELOTTE (*looking at* ASTORRE): You begin.

ASTORRE:

Down by the river, where green grows the grass,
Under the shining stars, fairy folk pass,
Fairies from Dream-land come trooping that way,
And there, by the river, your dolly will stay.

AMELOTTE:

Under the shining stars all the night long
The fairies come flocking with laughter and song,
Hastening to Fairy-land, ere break of day,
But there, in the green grass, your dolly will stay.

ASTORRE:

She is the whitest of all the white daisies,
Brightest of all is the gold crown she raises,
Reddest pink is the frill to her gown—
When you have found her, children, kneel down.

AMELOTTE:

Kneel down beside her, and tell her you know
That she is a fairy, and say she may go
Back to her Fairy-land happy and gay,
Kiss her and thank her, but don't make her stay.

(*She hesitates*): There was some more—but I have forgotten.

ASTORRE: Yes, so have I.

KING (*looking at Attendants*): Who taught them this?

(*The Attendants make gesture of denial.*)

AMELOTTE: The *Dream-lady* said it!

KING: Fiddlesticks! What is this Dream-lady like?

AMELOTTE: She is very pretty.

ASTORRE: She has daisies in her hair.

FIAMMETTA: Daisies? No, not daisies. She is crowned with a laurel wreath.

KING (*in a loud voice to* PRINCE): There! Not the same tale, you see! (*To children*) Now, listen, children: I forbid this imbecility. There *is* no Dream-lady. *I* don't see her, and therefore

what I don't see, don't you presume to see! Play with your dolls and rocking horses and fal-lals like reasonable beings. And never let me have to speak of this again

(*The children go out in tears.*)

AMELOTTE (*sobbing*): There *is* a Dream-lady!

ASTORRE (*sobbing*): Of course there's a Dream lady.

KING: What! Do they presume to argue with me? Do the very babies set me at naught? Here am I, a thoroughly reasonable, patient, temperate man, defied! Defied in my own Court by a pack of women and children! (*rushing away L.*) It's monstrous! Abominable! (*To Attendants, who make as though they would follow*) Keep off, I say! I will not be followed about from morning till night! I——

QUEEN (*aside to* FIAMMETTA): So like your father! Before the Prince, too: the last person one would wish to guess he wasn't born a king. (*Glancing at* PRINCE, *who has walked away*) Be wise, my daughter! Dreams are useless.

(*Exit.*)

PRINCE: What can I say to win you, fair Princess? Will you not leave this dreaming, and come out into the world with me? I will win kingdoms for your smile, and you shall be the fairest queen, and rule the broadest lands, of any lady on this earth. Is it nothing to you to wed with one brave in war, skilled in the chase, honoured and feared throughout his realm?

PRINCESS: Ah! but how little you understand! The prince I marry must be brave in war, skilled in the chase, honoured and feared indeed. But to such a prince may not the Dream-lady come?

PRINCE (*smiling*): What can I do, Princess, if she comes not to me?

PRINCESS (*sadly*): Nothing, I fear, but leave me. (*He makes gesture of dissent*) Yes, leave me now a little while alone. The King, I think, goes hunting. Will you not join him?

PRINCE (*turning to look after her as she walks away*): She is the sweetest lady in the world. Would I could find some way to win her! (*Half laughing*) Since she persists in this mad fantasy, I'd even see the lady of her dreams—if it were possible.

(*The* PRINCESS *sits, takes out her tablets, and begins to write, then sighs, and shakes her head. The* DREAM-LADY *enters, crowned with a laurel wreath. She stands behind the* PRINCESS *and gently takes the tablets from her hand.*)

PRINCESS (*turning joyfully*): The Dream-lady! (*She bends and kisses her hand.*) Lady, I feared another day would pass without a sight of you. It is so long—such a long time since you have come to me.

DREAM-LADY (*smiling*): Have I been well remembered? Not since the day you saw the Prince's picture!

PRINCESS: No, I confess it. Since I saw him, my books, my poems, all my dreams of fame, seem to mean nothing to me any more.

DREAM-LADY: And you would be his wife?

PRINCESS (*shaking her head*): I am afraid he does not see the Dream-lady, and—I am afraid—— (*Imploringly*) Lady, will you not go to him?

DREAM-LADY: He would not see me. He must first believe that I exist.

PRINCESS (*anxiously*): Shall I persuade him?

DREAM-LADY (*smiling*): Who knows? Perhaps. (*She slowly takes the wreath of laurels from her head while she moves away.*)

PRINCESS: Why do you take the laurels from your hair?

DREAM-LADY: You will not need them now.

PRINCESS: Shall I not see you any more?

DREAM-LADY: If the Prince sees me—never any more.

PRINCESS (*distressed*): Lady, I cannot lose you!

DREAM-LADY: Not if you gain your heart's desire? Can you have that unpaid for? Is the price too costly?

PRINCESS (*slowly*): No. But if I do not gain my heart's desire?

DREAM-LADY: Yours is the woman's risk. (*Giving her a rose*) Farewell. I take with me the laurel crown, and leave the rose with you.

(*She goes, smiling. The* PRINCESS *looks regretfully after her, then suddenly kisses the rose.*)

Enter the PRINCE.

PRINCESS (*starting*): Prince! You have returned?

PRINCE: I did not go, Princess. The King is—indisposed

PRINCESS: Ah! he is still angry, then? I am sorry, sir, that you have lost your sport.

PRINCE: And I, Princess, have blessed the King's annoyance, since it has brought me to you once again—before I say farewell.

PRINCESS (*falteringly*): Farewell?

PRINCE: Yes, for I cannot win you.

PRINCESS: But if the Dream-lady——

PRINCE (*sadly*): Princess, I fear I shall not see the Dream-lady. If she exists, it is to other, different folk she comes. To those two children in their innocence; to you, who are yourself a poem; to those, perhaps, who love as some men love

PRINCESS: But do you not love me?

PRINCE: I am ashamed to think how I came here to woo you. My queen, I thought, must do me honour She must have rank, and beauty, that my subjects may applaud my choice, and that I may be envied in my world. Of love, or of your happiness, Princess, I took no thought.

PRINCESS: And now?

PRINCE: And now, since I have seen you, watched you, talked with you, I find that I have never loved before. For your dear sake I could believe—even in this Dream-lady. Ah, Princess, I did not know that Love was such a mighty lord! (*He takes her hands, and while he speaks the* DREAM-LADY *appears, crowned with roses. He turns, sees her, and starts back*) The Dream-lady! (*Falls on one knee and kisses her hand. The* DREAM-LADY, *smiling, disappears*)

PRINCE (*turning to* PRINCESS, *and speaking as though dazed*) The Dream-lady! Then, Princess? (*kisses her*) . . . Was she not beautiful?

PRINCESS: How did she come to you?

PRINCE (*astonished*): Did you not see her—crowned with roses, red roses in her hand?

PRINCESS (*shaking her head*): I only saw your face, my Prince The Dream-lady will come to me no more. But I am content. I have your love instead.

KING. (*rushing in angrily, followed by* QUEEN) Oh, by all means send him away! Let him return Let us lose all our chances! We must not thwart our daughters, nowadays!

PRINCE (*leading* PRINCESS *to* KING *and* QUEEN): Sire, the Princess has given me my happiness.

QUEEN (*glancing from the* PRINCE *to* FIAMMETTA): My dear child! (*Embraces her.*)

KING (*with sudden change of voice*): I am rejoiced to find our daughter has remembered filial duty. Come here, my child, and kiss our hand. Prince, I commend her to you. (*Aside*) And don't have any of her nonsense! (*Strutting up and down*) I *thought* our kingly state and dignity must awe her to submission! (*Looking round*) Where are our attendants? Never any one about when they are wanted (*rushes out* L.)

QUEEN (*aside to* FIAMMETTA): My daughter, you have chosen wisdom's path, believe me.

PRINCESS (*happily*): Ah, mother! but the Prince has seen the Dream-lady.

QUEEN (*incredulously*): The Prince, my child, is very much in love!

Enter KING, *followed by Attendants with children.*

KING: Ladies! My lords! Let me announce to you the betrothal of our daughter, the Princess, to our fair friend the Prince of Goldacres. We will lead on now towards the Council Room, where with solemnity I will announce this thrice-blessed event. (*To* QUEEN, *aside*) I think, my love, something in the way of a banquet this evening might not be out of place

(*Attendants and Pages form two lines. Exeunt first* KING *and* QUEEN, *followed by* PRINCE *and* PRINCESS, *before whom the Attendants strew roses. Meanwhile the two children have crept away and hidden. In the midst of the bridal throng the* DREAM-LADY *enters, unobserved except by the children When every one else has gone, they run to her*)

ASTORRE: Here she is!

AMELOTTE: Our Dream-lady!

DREAM-LADY (*looking after the disappearing bridal train*): Ah! they may forget, but (*putting her arms round the Prince and Princess*) I shall always have the children!

An Old View of Knebworth

THE HISTORY

OF

JENNY SPINNER; OR, THE GHOST OF KNEBWORTH HOUSE.

BY ELIZABETH MARIA JAMES,

1780—1862.

WITH A LETTER BY THE FIRST EARL OF LYTTON TO THE WRITER.

PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME.*

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE circumstances under which the story was written are described in the late Earl of Lytton's life of his father. In giving an account of Knebworth House, as it existed prior to the extensive reconstruction and demolitions made by his grandmother, Lord Lytton writes:—

"These haunted rooms were pulled down in 1812, but are still remembered with mingled awe and pride by a few aged inhabitants of Knebworth village. They are minutely described in a little story called 'Jenny Spinner, or the Ghost of Knebworth House.' This story, written in singularly pure English, with a lively simplicity of style, has never, I believe, been published, but there are a few printed copies of it at Knebworth, with a short criticism on it written by my father after the death of his mother, which led to his acquaintance with the authoress, a Miss James. She was, he says, very original, a thorough gentlewoman, well informed and amusing; their correspondence was only ended by her death. In it she calls herself a lively octogenarian, and one of her letters to another correspondent, who has favoured me with a copy of it, thus describes the circumstances under which 'Jenny Spinner' was written:—'We were a very merry Christmas party at Knebworth about 1800. Among other subjects of amusing talk was the ghost; we could get no information from the aged gatekeeper or any other old person in the village, except that a ghost there certainly was. Our amiable host proposed that we should try our hands in writing a story about the ghost, since it could not be got to tell us its own story, and I determined to make up one as unlike what was expected of me as possible. The only interesting fact about it is, that

* We are indebted to Mr George W. Miller for the private copy of this story, which came into his possession some years ago, on the death of a relative who had been on terms of close friendship with its author.

it was written on the spot, and that the old Knebworth House is most truthfully described in it. . . .'

When Lord Lytton first discovered the secret of the authorship of "Jenny Spinner" he sent the following letter to Miss James.

"KNEBWORTH,
Jan. 7th, 1856

"DEAR MISS JAMES,

"Yes, *I claim you as the delight of my childhood, and the admiration of my mature criticism. So the charming author of 'Jenny Spinner' is at last known. You cannot think how much I tried to discover her, how I value the single copy of that exquisite work which I possess; nor do you, I think, know what great authors have admired you. Never does any eminent one come here but what 'Jenny Spinner' is submitted to him. Dickens, Forster, Douglas Jerrold, Talfourd, artists, critics, poets, all unite with one accord that for delicious naiveté of style, quiet humour, and the harmony of perfect keeping, 'Jenny Spinner' is a masterpiece, and Goldsmith might have envied it. I often wish it were republished.*

"*Where have you hidden your genius? But now I have found you, do let us know each other.*

"*Adieu! Long years and happy ones to you.*

"E. BULWER LYTTON."

THE HISTORY OF JENNY SPINNER.

THE day I well remember on which I first came to Knebworth House. Aunt had sent for me; the waggon brought me about seven in the evening, it was winter, and pitch dark. I had on my best gown, a grey serge with white cuffs and robings, a straw hat of our country make, my black mittens, mother's own best scarlet cardinal, and a brave large pincushion and scissors at my side, hung on by a steel chain. I thought myself marvellously fine, for I was but sixteen, and had never been beyond our village. Aunt was a comely woman of her age, tall and stately; she wore a mob and pinners, stiff as buckram, and white as snow; I looked up to her as a very fine gentlewoman, and trembled like a leaf when she took me by the hand and led me into her room. (She was, you know, the housekeeper, and had lived in the family ever since Sir Rowland came of age, at which time she married Mr. Abram Fitton, the butler, and settled in the great house.) Aunt turned me round and round, and said I was a likely girl enough, but tossed up her head at my country trappings, however, as she promised to give me better the next day, I did not much mind.

After I had had something to eat, she took me into the Music Gallery, which looks down upon the Banquetting Hall. Good Sirs! how I was struck all of a heap! if I thought Aunt fine, what did I think now? I looked down upon a grand feast, lighted (I verily believe) by a hundred candles. At the top of the long table sat my Lady, in a green and gold gown, a necklace that shone like stars, and her head adorned with the same; at the bottom sat Sir Rowland in a cut velvet suit, and a bushy wig that spread all over his back; young Master was at my Lady's right hand, a poor pale-faced youth to my mind, but everybody seemed talking to and courting him; and to be sure, if scarlet and gold could make a fine gentleman, he was one. Divers and sundry Knights and Ladies of high degree were of the company, but amongst them all none took my fancy so much as a smart youth, very handsomely dressed, though in the same colours as Sir Rowland's livery. He stood at my Lady's right hand, and only waited on her, and she always spoke to him smiling-like, as if he were a gentleman's son. For my part, I thought all the others looked like fools to him. His eyes were as bright as my Lady's jewels, and his chestnut hair curled in corkscrews almost away from his white forehead. He was my Lady's own page, and his name was Anthony Crofts.

Nobody saw me as I peeped through the banisters, for the place was full of musicians. That evening was one of the happiest of my life. My Uncle Abram, the butler, and Master Gorges, the bailiff, and Mistress Deborah, my Lady's confidante, were in Aunt's room, and made a merry supper of the relics. In the midst we heard a gentle tap at the door, and who should it be but Anthony! He came in making a bow like any lord.

"Mistress Fitton," said he, "I have brought you a brimming cup of sack posset, which has only once been lifted to the lips of a fair lady. I thought it a pity such good stuff shqild be wasted among the men, and so I have brought it to you."

"That's a good lad," said she, "and pray come and partake with us." But he did not sit down; he took a glass of wine and drank to all our healths, and then sprang out of the door again. I thought I had never seen such a gentleman as he before.

After he was gone, Aunt told us he was of gentle blood, of the grand family of Crofts of Bardswell. His father was a younger son or cousin, I think, and having married very much below him, the family had disowned him; both he and his wife were dead, and had left this only boy an orphan, and his relations thought they could do nothing better for him than to get him to be a page to the rich Lady Lytton. Sir Rowland, too, was such a good man, and had almost promised to get him a commission in the army when he was old enough, for Anthony had always said he was determined to serve his king and country.

Do you know, when she said he was an orphan, my very heart leaped, and the tears came into my eyes, to think we were brother and sister for that much.

Anthony had not forgotten to take more than one opportunity of giving me a sly glance, which seemed, I thought, to say, "I much admire you, pretty Mistress Jane." To be sure, I heard that said by many of my Aunt's visitors; however, I did not choose to show I was much pleased, nor do I think I should have cared for their praises, but that, being spoken in the hearing of Anthony, I thought would raise me in his good opinion; and truly I began from that very night, from the first hour I saw him, to desire to please him. In sooth, love is a strange thing! I went to bed as happy as a queen. Next morning, my Aunt fitted me on a suit of her clothes, and I must own, when I looked in the glass, I thought myself well-looking enough. My Aunt had sent for me on purpose to present me to my Lady, and she knew her humours so well as to be sure the better I looked, the better she would be pleased. So, after I was dressed, having charged me to hold up my head and cast down my eyes, and drop a curtsey at every word, she took me up to her. My stars! how I trembled every limb! It was in the great drawing-room I first saw my Lady; she was working tapestry, with her feet upon a blue velvet footstool. I behaved just as Aunt bid me, and had the good fortune to please her so well, that she would needs keep me with her that very day. First she taught me to work tapestry, then she heard me read, and having tried me in the first chapter of St. Matthew, which I knew by heart (though I did not tell her so), she was quite pleased, and told Sir Rowland and the company, at dinner, that I read almost as well as the Parson.

Finding I could write a little too, she said I should write out her grandmother's receipt-book, which was in such a crabbed hand, and such outlandish spelling, that Aunt, though a very good scholar herself, had never yet been able to make out any of the writing. Fool that I was! I thought all this very fine, and that I was going to Heaven in a string, as the old saying is, and after a little time I began, whilst I sat at work, to build the finest of castles. Says I to myself, "I shall get quite into favour with my Lady, and in a few years shall be a good match for Anthony, and Aunt growing old, will, I daresay, be glad enough to have me for her deputy. Uncle too would, I daresay, give up his place to him, as he is already so well to do; but we may marry before then, and we may perhaps be left to take care of the house whilst his Honour and my Lady are in London; and we may get Aunt to leave us the key of the sweetmeat closet, and oh! how happy we shall be!"

Fool that I was, I never thought of the long dreary winters, writing receipts and working tapestry, before any of this could be. I have often wondered how all this could come into my head, when at that time I had never exchanged more than a word with him, and that I should look forward to our being married;—it was very odd.

I soon became quite a favourite with my Lady, and Sir Rowland was always the kindest of masters. And now, my dear Dorothy, I will tell you something that I could not bring in before. The first night of my being at Knebworth, when I looked down upon the company in the Hall, Sir Rowland sat with his back to me; but

once or twice, when he turned his head, I saw enough of his face to bring to my memory some one I had seen before, I could not quite recollect where. The day after, all the gentlemen visiting there were to ride to Hatfield, and Aunt and Uncle both thought the fine gentlemen, mounted on the beautiful horses, would be quite a sight for me; so they placed me at a window where I could see them all set off. Well, one of the gentlemen saw me looking, I daresay very earnestly, and touched Sir Rowland with his whip, and then pointed it up to my window. Sir Rowland looked up, and I saw his full face, but it was all in such a flash of time, that I could not draw back before he must have seen me. That look quite brought to my memory where I had seen him before. My mother, you must know, lived at Barnet before she came nearer Knebworth. One spring day I went to pick the first primroses in a lane where they were earliest to be found, and I was coming down with my hands full, when I saw a gentleman on horseback stop at the end of the lane. I called out quite loud "Tobit!" (that was the name of our dog, mother had found it out for him in the Bible). The gentleman, at the sound of my voice, quite started in his saddle, and looked very hard at me, and then he beckoned with his finger for me to come up to him. I thought, Maybe he wants to ask the way, so I went. But he only looked at me and said, "My pretty child, what is your name?"

I said, "I am Mrs. Hoper's little girl."

"Is your name Hoper?"

"No," I said; "my father and mother's name was Doveton, but they are both dead."

He quite started again, and said, "God bless you!" and put his hand on my head, for my bonnet hung behind by the strings. "And these curls, too," he said, "and that voice," and he spoke half-crying like. Then he took out his purse in a hurry, and offered me some money out of it.

I said, "What am I to do with the money, Sir?"

He said, "Buy yourself a pretty gown."

"Oh, but I have plenty that were my mother's, and very nice ones too, at home, but mother won't let me wear any but this old one when I go up that lane primrosing all amongst the thorns."

Then the young gentleman and the servant rode up, and the other gentleman seemed quite to forget himself, for he let the purse fall to the ground, and rode off with the money in his hand.

I picked up the purse and kept it. And now you shall hear what my mother told me only the very day before I went to Knebworth—that she was waiting for me on the other side of the road, and saw and heard all that passed. She knew him to be a gentleman who had in his youth been desperately in love with my mother, then Miss Raby, but she being only the daughter of a poor clergyman, and he a gentleman of high family and great fortune, his friends set themselves against his marrying her, and they got him away to travel. She married Lieutenant Doveton, he was poor too, but very good, and was obliged to go to the wars, and there he lost his life; and now, though my eyes are full of tears for my poor parents, my heart thanks God for my good mother Hoper. She was a distant cousin to my mamma, and nursed and tended her, and when she died she begged her to take me and look upon me as her own child; and so she did indeed, and she gave her everything she had in the world, so that, as she was not poor, we never wanted anything.

Mother bade me be sure never to tell a word of this to any one, and not to put myself in Sir Rowland's way, for if he took too much notice of me, maybe my Lady would not like it.

However, to cut my story short, I very soon became quite a favourite with my old Lady; by degrees she gave me clothes quite fit for a gentlewoman, and by degrees she took me entirely from Aunt's room, and made me a close prisoner in hers. For my part, because my chains were gilded, I did not perceive they were chains. Sir Rowland and the young Squire had been gone out on a visit for some days, whilst these alterations took place; and Anthony was with them, which was one thing that blinded me, for had he been at home, his sorrowful looks would soon have warned me of my danger. The very day that my Lady had a little bed put up for me in the little room within Deborah's the gentlemen came home. I remember I had on that day a pale pink damask gown, a lace round eared cap, and a necklace of white beads. I was coming from the garden with my

lap full of flowers, to dress my Lady's bow-pot. When I saw Anthony come up the gravel walk, I flew towards him; he came on and made a low bow.

"Anthony!" cried I; but Anthony looked as cold and dismal as the old picture at the end of the gallery. It popped into my head that he was jealous; but I was resolved to be beforehand with him. "So," says I, "I am afraid, Mr. Anthony, you have met with a new mistress in your travels, and quite forgotten me?"

"Oh, Mistress Jane," he replied, "I wish I could."

"I am very much obligated to you indeed,—and pray, why?" returned I.

"Because" (said he very earnestly, and with tears in his eyes), "because you are too much above me, Mistress Jane,—you are born to be a lady; you look like one, and one of the rich Squires that come here will make you one. You are not fit for such a poor fellow as I."

Down dropped the flowers, and I turned as pale as death; however, I recovered presently, and trying to laugh, told him he was the most foolish, ungrateful fellow in the world. These words almost made him smile again. He then gathered up the flowers, and as he was putting them into my apron, whispered he had something to say to me. I told him I had no time then, but that if he would come that night, about nine o'clock, under my window, I would hear what it was.

So we parted; but no dinner could I eat, or rest get, till bed-time, when I went up to my room, and found Anthony punctually waiting under my window. Oh! I shall never forget that conversation! He made me see I was like a bird in a cage.

"But," said he, "if you will but be constant, Jane, all may be well: keep but your word, and nothing can hurt us. But alas! you must meet with many temptations you think not of; however, say your prayers, and keep the men at a distance. There is that Dunlop, that captain."

"What! that old figure!" cried I. "Oh, Anthony, you do not know me; I shall never forsake you, and will always look upon you as a true friend."

This made him quite leap for joy; he said his heart was as light as a feather, and in return he said he would think of me day and night, and do his best to deserve me.

So sweet was our talk, I believe we should have gone on until daybreak if Mistress Deborah had not come to the door, which had no key; but I had placed a heavy box and a chair against it, so she could not push it open at first. In an instant I was down from the casement, the casement shut, and myself sitting on the bed with the candle in my hand, and my Lady's grandmother's receipt-book on my lap, open. I would not take a religious book, for I thought it would be wicked to pretend to be reading *that*; but I thought, for my part, talking with Anthony was quite as improving as spelling out that old crabbed black and yellow writing. Mistress Deborah was surprised to find me up; however, she commended my diligence, and my caution, too, in fastening my door. (I could not help laughing to myself)

But, to cut short my story, for I verily believe I shall never have done, a twelvemonth nearly passed away, during which time I improved in my writing, and learned to spell; my Lady taught me to behave, and had me instructed in dancing. I learnt of my own accord to sing "Barbara Allen," and "Death and the Lady," and many more songs, amongst the rest "Chevy Chase," which I got by heart. Anthony, too, grew every day more in favour with Aunt and Uncle, indeed with everybody; but so cunning was he, not one suspected his love for me, for I was looked upon as likely to be made a gentlewoman of.

However, poor fellow! he was not without his troubles on my account, nor I on my own. This Captain Dunlop was a great, frightful, red haired Scotchman, as proud and as ugly as could be; he pretended to have been a great fighter, but I believe in my heart it was only with bottles and glasses, for his face was scarred all over, and his nose the colour and shape of a red potato; in general he had a savage frown, then, to be sure, he was frightful enough; but when he tried to smile he was ten times more ugly. So this figure, forsooth, who was a sort of companion to young Master, and flatterer to my Lady, took it into his head to have what he called a liking for me. Marry come up! I must have been in a hard case indeed to have had such a one as he; for my part, I was ready to hit him a box on the ear whenever he grinned in my face (which he often did); however, I

thought that would not become me. But the worst is to come. Young Master seemed really and truly to like me, and having daily opportunities, was for ever plaguing me with his good nature and his looks and sighs. At last his passion, as he called it, was found out by Deborah, told to Dunlop, who again told it to my Lady, and what I underwent is unspeakable. There was my Lady inveterate in thinking I had made use of arts to inveigle the affections of her son; Aunt and Uncle prognosticating my disgrace and their own; old Dunlop, that worst of traitors, insulting me with a grin of triumph; young Master's woebegone face at every turn in the stairs; and, worst of all, Anthony, biting his lips, and ready to burst with the pain of concealing his sentiments, for we agreed *he* must, at any rate, keep *his* ground in the family. As to Sir Rowland, though he appeared not to see anything of all this, yet he never failed to give me a kind word or look whenever an opportunity offered, for though he never openly opposed his Lady's will, yet somehow he had a secret liking for all those that did.

"Well, all of a sudden, no more shrugs, frowns, nor scoldings, but a dead calm, and a notable scheme contrived to settle all differences; and what in the name of wonder do you think this was? Why, for me to marry Dunlop, to set my Lady's mind at ease.

"For goodness' sake," quoth I, when my Aunt proposed it to me, "what am I to do this for? I, who have neither wished nor wanted, nor have encouraged any of their nonsense, why am I to bear the punishment of their fault? I am not like that Pamela my Lady reads about, that was in love with her master. She is welcome, for me, to marry her son to Pope Joan, or to Peggy Winch at the gate, to-morrow, if she pleases; and as for Captain Dunlop, I had rather be a slave in Turkey than the wife of such a one as he!"

"Wicked, wicked creature," exclaimed my Aunt, "after all my Lady has done for you!"

"Well, and I've done for her too; I have paid enough for her favour, and if I had not, and she had done ten times more for me, am I to be miserable for life, just to make her easy? Lack-a-day, Aunt, I would be dragged through the pond, or walk barefeet, or sleep in the churchyard all night to do my Lady or her posterity any service; but marry that fellow I won't."

"Fellow!" repeated poor Aunt again, looking full of fear and terror, "and pray what answer am I to carry to my Lady?"

"Why," said I, "'tis easy enough to make out that from what I have said."

"Well, after a little more altercation, away went Aunt, and pondering within herself the only way to keep her place would be to pretend violent anger to me, when she entered my Lady's presence she thought proper to fall down in a fit; and when she recovered, related in broken accents my bad behaviour, and my firm refusal! The Captain was there, and looked as black as a thunder-cloud; my Lady stormed—old and young Master were both gone far away that day (worse luck for me). Well, my Lady and the Captain were closeted for half an hour; at last I received orders to deliver up all my wardrobe—that is, everything my Lady had given me—and to depart that very night for my own home.

This seemed such blessed news for me, that I could hardly help jumping for joy when Mistress Deborah delivered it, adding, "See what your misbehaviour has brought you to!" However, I prepared instantly to pack up. After I had done, and was creeping downstairs to say a word or two to the maids without Mistress Deborah's knowledge (for she never would let me have anything to say to them since I had been her charge, as she called it), who should I meet first but Anthony coming bolt out of my Lady's closet! I caught hold of his sleeve, for he seemed as if going to push by me; and sure enough he shook me off, and burst away from me as if I had been a viper. Well, I stood a few minutes, pondering what the lad could mean; I would not think but that he was in sport. I went on into the servants' hall, and poor simple Sally Hawthorn, the dairy-maid, whispered me that Anthony should say that "I should never be a poor man's wife, and that now I should be neither fit for gentle or simple." Those words were like fire in my ears and a thorn in my heart; however, I would rather have died than have shown what I felt. Besides, the maidens did not know that Anthony had made any professions to me, so they only thought him ill-natured, so I took an affectionate

leave of them all. Mr. Anthony, forsooth, did not make his appearance Even Aunt and Uncle seemed sorry for my misfortunes, though they did not know the worst of them. At eight o'clock in the evening I went off in the cart to meet the waggon, which passed by the bottom of the Park I could not help shedding a few tears at leaving a house where I had met with so much kindness, and where I had first seen that false-hearted youth; indeed, I could not stop crying, and I don't know when I should if it had not come into my mind all at once that he pretended to like me because he thought my Lady would portion me, and that now I was turned out of the Great House his avaricious mind was turned too In a moment my tears dried up, and I felt as if I cared not for Anthony, though I wished I was in my coffin instead of the cart; indeed it went nearly as slow as a hearse.

At last I began to wonder it did not come to the Park gate, so I lifted up the wrapper and asked the man if he knew his road.

"Yes," was his answer; "better than you, mayhap, Mistress."

Here my mind misgave me, for I had thought it odd before that I was to go by the waggon that travelled in the night time, rather than the one that went by day; however, there was no halp, for Tom Hobbs (that was the man's name) was always as sulky as a pig. Well, we went on for about an hour, up and down, round and round. For my part, I said my prayers, and recommended myself to Heaven.

At last, however, we seemed to get upon a better bit of road, and looking out, I saw by the light of the stars (for it was a frosty night) two great tall figures in black, standing beside a great gateway. We drove up and stopped; the two figures took each an arm, and throwing a long cloak about me, muffled my face. I was so stupefied with grief and terror, I had not power, hardly will, to resist; but I did send forth a low shriek, something like a groan, when I felt my arm griped as if to tell me to be silent; so I obeyed, for, thought I, God is always present, and above wicked men, and I will trust in Him. They hurried me along, and presently we began to go up a winding staircase and passed through two rooms; at last, stopped at a third, when one of my conductors bid the other, in a gruff voice, go for orders, and when he returned, to knock three times at the turret door, and he should be let in I then heard the man go heavily downstairs, the other following him, a door lock, and then the other returned; as soon as he entered the room he came and took off the cloak, than his own hat, to which was fastened a crape, and at the same time casting off a long black mantle, he threw himself at my feet I gazed with astonishment, and screamed with fear and joy, for it was Anthony

I forgot my anger at that moment, but yet looked at him as if stupefied.

"My dearest Jenny," said he, "be composed: no harm can happen to you whilst I am near Nothing can secure me the power of being your friend, but appearing to be your enemy."

"But where am I? Why in this dismal place?" cried I.

To all my questions, he answered "You are come back to the Great House again—you have never been out of the Park—you are in the gallery chamber, which leads to the tapestry apartments. My watchful caution discovered to me that that old fox Dunlop intended to lie in wait, to seize you in your journey, and carry you away; so I found means to persuade my Lady it would be a better thing to keep you a prisoner under her own roof, as the young Squire might find you out at your own home, at the same time it was necessary everybody should believe you were gone thither. She means to keep you here till he is married, and to punish you by depriving you of your liberty"

"What have I done, miserable creature that I am, to deserve all this?" cried I.

"Oh! Jenny," said Anthony, "how differently we feel! A prison would be a palace to me if you were to be my gaoler."

"Oh! the goodness of the best man that ever was born would not make up to me for the loss of my liberty"

I could not help saying this saucy thing, for it was no more than he deserved for frightening me so, however, I was so happy, lightened of a load to find his coldness all pretence, that I was ready to cry and laugh at the same time. Well, the signal of three taps at the turret door being heard, Anthony clapt on his hat and crape, and went to open it, telling me

to be sure and look as if we were enemies. Up came the man puffing and blowing, and I knew him by his figure to be Grimbold, the under gamekeeper, a savage, sulky fellow: he came lugging up the narrow staircase a spinning wheel and heap of flax, a pitcher of water, a hunch of bread, an old rug, and some faggots. Having set down his fine load—"Here" (said he in a disguised voice) "is your breakfast, here your daily bread, and the daily task by which you must earn it." Having said this, he turned about to depart; Anthony followed him, but as he was going away, gave me a look full of compassion, kindness, and promise. I locked the door after them, and heard them bolt it on the outside. I then took up the lamp they had left me, and held it up. I had never been in this room to stay before: it led to a set of chambers never used, and therefore said to be haunted. Though I am not so hardened as to disbelieve in ghosts and apparitions, yet I must own I never heard of anything appearing in these rooms, though lights had, I know, been seen in the windows of the turret stairs that led to them from the great court; and once, a figure as tall as the steeple appeared on the battlements at the top,—nay, more, was heard to pull the alarm bell; so none of the servants would ever go up that tower after dark.

The room I was to sleep in is hung with tapestry, full of great figures, with the colours so faded that I am sure they all looked like ghosts; over the chimney-piece are carved figures of some heathen man and woman with dogs, and on each side of the fireplace is a frightful carved figure; there is in the next room a handsome bedstead, with furniture once red, and in stripes;* and, opposite, a great thick purple cloth curtain, which is always drawn, and looks very dismal: for my part, I was afraid to look behind it. I found plenty of oil in the lamp; so I set it in the chimney-corner, in hopes that it would burn all night; and having said my prayers, laid myself down in my clothes, and shut my eyes directly, repeating to myself all the verses I could think of. I soon fell asleep. Next morning I awoke, not much refreshed, lighted my fire or my faggot with the lamp, which still burnt, and breakfasted on bread and water; then I took to my spinning. I spun and spun, but nobody came. At last I heard the clock strike three—I left off, sat down and began to grow very melancholy. I dined on the rest of the bread and water, and spun again. I stopped very often, to listen whether anybody walked in the picture-gallery, but in vain. At seven o'clock, however, Anthony came, dressed as before. When he saw me pale, cold, and miserable, tears almost came into his eyes; besides faggots, and oil for the lamp, he brought concealed under his cloak some cold meat, a manchet, and a bottle of ale.

"You must," said he, "my dear Jenny, think strangely of my neglgence for not coming before, but I am watched, and was forbade coming earlier; indeed, the least suspicion of my being your friend would cause me to be removed, and perhaps confined too; for whether it is my Lady's anxiety to have the Squire marry (he having declared since he has known you that he will not), or whether it is some hidden cause with which we are not acquainted, I know not; but she seems as much afraid of your being discovered as if you were a traitor to your country, and as anxious to have your spirit brought down as if her salvation depended on it. Tom Hobbs has had a silver padlock put on his tongue, and Grimbold and I are to share great rewards, it is said. The picture-gallery is locked up, that no one may discover you that way. Sir Rowland has taken the Squire away on purpose, upon your account, for they want him to marry the daughter of my Lady Loftus, who is a great person at Court, and has promised that when he is her son-in-law she will get him a place there, and have him made a Lord besides."

Anthony then ended by desiring me to conceal the bones of the chicken carefully, and said he must go, for fear of being suspected. But, first, I begged he would take the flax I had spun. He looked at it mournfully. "I had almost," he said, "forgotten the worst part of my errand, which is to tell you my cruel old Lady requires such a task as this performed every day, and I must say I would advise you to obey her. I wish to Heaven I could spin," said he, sighing; "could not you teach me?" I could not help smiling at the thought, but I told him it

* All the descriptions of the house and apartments are exactly as they were when this was written

was the kindest thing my Lady could do, as constant employment would divert my thoughts. He seemed much pleased to hear this, and went away.

I then made up my fire, and spread my supper, which seemed to me the most delicious meal I had ever tasted; indeed, I do not know a better receipt, to give a relish to a supper, than a breakfast and dinner of bread and water. However, mine had like to have been spoiled, for in the midst I thought I heard the noise of rustling of silks, and the dark cloth curtain moved. Down dropped the morsel I was lifting to my mouth, and I sat like one stupefied, with my eyes fixed upon the cloth curtain: at last I got up softly, took the lamp in my hand, and with a sort of mad courage ran towards and dragged it aside. How I laughed! it was only a cranny left in a stopped-up window, and I knew at once the noise must have been a gust of wind.

Now, if I had not done this, my supper would have been spoiled. I carefully poked the chicken bones behind the tapestry, through a slit, and went to bed quite happy in comparison. I soon fell asleep, but the stirring of a mouse will wake me; accordingly I was effectually disturbed by the opening and shutting of the door of the next apartment. I started up and listened; holding my breath, I heard distinctly somebody dragging something heavy across the floor, and at length stop, as it seemed, close to my door. My blood froze; I attempted to cry out, but could not; I heard a short, loud wheezing, as of one tired and out of breath; it became louder, and then I knew it to be the gamekeeper, who was troubled with the asthma. I knew what a ferocious fellow he was, and, moreover, that he was the only one except Anthony who knew the secret of my prison. I could do nothing but snatch my knife and scissors out of my pockets, and arm each hand with them; however, there was no occasion, for the person, whoever he was, having made a dead stop for a moment (I suppose at hearing me move), went off without his load, carefully drawing-to the door after him. However, I got no more comfortable sleep that night; I fancied there was a dead body in the next room—I even thought it might be poor Anthony: then twenty stories that I had heard of this Grimbold rushed into my mind; among the rest, of his having been concerned in furnishing a doctor at Stevenage with a dead body, for him to make a skeleton of. Whether it is true or not I cannot tell, but I know the mob would have torn him to pieces if Sir Rowland had not taken his part.

In the morning Grimbold brought me my breakfast of bread and water. I could not help looking at him very inquisitively. Good God! how I shuddered when I saw the wrist of his shirt covered with blood! A very fierce look he gave made me cast down my eyes; I then saw his stockings spotted with blood, mine quite froze, and he departed. That dismal day passed without my seeing Anthony. At seven o'clock Grimbold came for my work—I did not once look at him. When he was gone my spirits forsook me. I thought of nothing but the dead corpse, which was, I was sure, in the next room. I was full of dismal fears, when I heard Anthony's well-known voice under the window at the side of the bed: I flew to it, and discovered him beneath, holding up a lanthorn, and singing distinctly these words,

"Out of the window fling a rope,
And, Jenny, cheer your heart with hope."

I had no rope; but quick as lightning I cut down two thick strips from the crimson curtains, tied them together, and threw them out of the window, which had been forgotten to be fastened up, indeed, the space between the bars of the casement was too small for me to get out of. I presently drew up a small basket, which contained something for supper, on which was written these words: "I find your keepers are to take their turns to watch you; I was not informed of this plan till to-day. Deborah is the cunningest of all serpents! It will be my turn to-morrow; in the meantime keep up your spirits, and depend upon the prudence of your faithful Anthony."

I flew to the window again, he was gone. I could not help saying aloud, "Good, good fellow, as discreet as kind!" I was quite another thing, I piled together the relics of my fire, and made a blaze and a good supper, but not quite so comfortable a one as the night before, for the heavy load in the next room hung like a dead weight on my heart.

That night I did not go to sleep until I had heard the gamekeeper come up and drag away his load, so my fears

were relieved, and my suspicions confirmed, for I verily believe it was a dead body out of the churchyard. I fell asleep ruminating.

Next day nothing remarkable happened till, about two o'clock in the afternoon, I thought I heard the gallery door softly opened and shut, and a step softly advancing, with that sort of rustling sound which a silk gown makes. I had left my spinning for a few minutes to walk up and down the room, for my feet were quite numbed with standing. I stopped to listen, and I thought the person stopped too, near my door; I put my eye to the keyhole, and, to my astonishment, met another great eye staring at mine from the outside. I started back, and was quite frightened, for I knew it to be Mistress Deborah's. A thought popped into my head. "O dear!" I cried, "and is this a ghost!"—and pretending to be dreadfully frightened, all of a sudden I popped a straw through the keyhole, and immediately I heard a violently angry shake of her silk gown; and away went Mistress Deborah, stump, stump, all down the gallery, quite forgetting to creep back as she had come.

At seven o'clock Anthony arrived; as soon as he entered the room, I saw an unusual sadness on his face. When he had fastened the door, he came and threw himself down on a chair by me. "O! Jenny," cried he, "I know why you are so ill used. Dunlop returned, burning with concealed rage and disappointment; hardly could he forbear betraying how he had been provoked at not meeting you in the waggon, for he had watched about the Park pales till three in the morning, had been shot at by Grimbold for a poacher, and narrowly escaped with his life; however, now he finds you are in the house he is delighted. The plan is, by all this severity, to induce you to become his wife, and you are so much in their power, that I have everything to dread; and Deborah, for some cause or other, is more violent than ever against you to-day" (ah! thinks I, my foolish trick): "for when you are married to Dunlop, he is to carry you away to a farm in Derbyshire, which my Lady has promised him, and then a parson, a cousin of Deborah's, is to come in his place, and she is quite mad to get this all over."

"Oh! take me away with you," cried I; "take me away! I can never stay another night here."

"Alas, dearest Jenny, you do not know what you ask. Dunlop is as sly as he is ugly, and do you think he will tamely give up such a prize as you? I will see what is to be done with Grimbold. Every moment is precious; the wretch is in the house; and to-morrow I shall not see you."

"Oh, do not talk of Grimbold," said I; and then I told him all that had passed in my mind concerning *him*.

Anthony listened attentively, and whilst I was speaking drew a little hammer out of his pocket, and began pulling some nails out of a closet door, by the side of the fireplace. When I had done he said, "A thought strikes me, what you have said of Grimbold confirms suspicions I have long harboured, that he is a game-stealer as well as a game-keeper. You have often heard me talk of the light seen at the windows of the round tower. I once had the curiosity to watch all night. I saw a man, with a torch in his hand, go in at the turret door; I was sure, by the step and figure, it was Grimbold. I then certainly did see the light in the window, as he mounted the staircase; afterwards he came out without the light, and an hour afterwards returned, carrying a heavy sack on his shoulders, and slowly and cautiously creeping along. The cunning fellow, having once given the alarm of a ghost, knew he should not be pursued, even if he were seen, after. I have imagined a plan for your escape, founded on those circumstances, and will put it into execution before to-morrow morning. In the meantime, employ yourself with drawing out the nails of this door" (which had been fastened up, because the back had been taken away to make the closet in the next room larger), "and dress yourself in another suit of clothes, then endeavour to go to sleep. At one o'clock in the morning you will be awakened by a noise; but do not be frightened—it will be me at your door."

I pressed him to tell me his plan, but not a word more could I get out of him; so he left me, and I directly set about what he desired. Punctual to his word Anthony came to my door. I started up and let him in. He was followed by Grimbold.

"Mistress Jenny," said Anthony on entering, "here are three pieces of gold

"I stopped to listen, and I thought the person stopped, too near the door"

your Aunt gave me to send you. Would you think them too much to give anybody who should help to deliver you from your confinement?"

"Oh! no," cried I; "on the contrary, I should think myself bound to do much for them when I was at liberty."

"I told you," said he, turning to Grimbold, "Mistress Jane was of a very generous disposition, and this money shall be yours."

The man answered nothing, but nodded his head, as was his custom, and went out; but returned immediately, dragging in a dead doe, for which having received the three pieces of gold, he departed.

We then dressed the poor carcase, still dripping with blood, in my suit of clothes, having cast it on the floor, concealed the feet, and covered the head with my black hood, and placed an open knife by its side. It looked, at first sight, exactly like a poor wretch that had murdered herself. As I gazed on the miserable spectacle, I thanked Heaven I was preserved from being such a one; on the contrary, I hoped to be the better for *my* troubles as long as I lived. Anthony interrupted my thoughts by desiring me to be ready by daybreak to let him nail me up in the closet, and as he briefly explained his reasons and design, I consented; though, to be sure, nobody could feel more desolate than I did when, having knocked in the last nail, Anthony whispered a kind of farewell through the crevice, and left me with no creature, living or dead, near but the poor bleeding doe. However, in the morning I had some reward for the uncomfortable hours I had passed, for who of all others should resolve to pay me a visit but Mistress Deborah herself! She was so incensed at my behaviour, that she was resolved to come and see what threats and scoldings would do. My Lady too, and Dunlop, wished her to come and sound me, I found afterwards; for it was thought a girl of my age would submit to anything rather than bread and water, imprisonment, and hard work. So accordingly she came to pay me a visit.

In the mean time, Anthony, knowing that women are the best to make believe and set forward reports, gave the old fat cook (a known coward, and very curious) a hint to watch Deborah's steps that morning; so she had crept up after her. The moment Deborah had opened the door, she was struck with the sight of poor me, as she thought, weltering in my blood; so she made no more ado but, uttering the loudest and most horrible shriek I ever heard, took to her heels with all speed, overturning poor cook in her way, and who, as soon as she could scramble up, followed her to the turret stairs, down which they ran, or rather tumbled over one another. Deborah restrained her tongue from crying Murder, but when she got to the bottom (as I have heard since) fell into fits. One of the servant boys, who was crossing the court, seeing them both come rolling down together, thought they were seized with convulsions, and, running into the kitchen, spread the alarm. Presently, the court was a scene of uproar and confusion. Anthony, ever vigilant, whipt upstairs, and locked the door of the murderous chamber, lest any of the men should come up and discover the cheat.

As soon as Deborah could crawl, she desired to be led to my Lady's apartment; to whom having related the subject of her fright, these two miserable women felt all the torments of fear and remorse. Anthony alone was admitted to their confidence; they loaded him with praises for his caution, and commendations of his fidelity. The earnest manner in which he took upon himself to put in practice every precaution to hush up this unfortunate affair drew from them fresh encomiums. Master Grimbold, too, was honoured with a conference, and the proud, haughty Lady L——, who scarcely deigned to step on the same ground, condescended to promise, profess, and almost go down on her knees to an old deer-stealer, so truly do "evil deeds bow proud heads."

However, he behaved as well as he could, being quite under the command of Anthony, who was now master of his secret, nevertheless, the man could scarcely help grinning in the two old ladies' faces. They were in some doubt, at first, whether they should tell the whole truth to Dunlop, but Lady L——, luckily remembering she had a paper in her possession of his writing, in which he laid down rules for severe treatment of me, she determined to inform him, as this paper would stand very much against him if ever the affair should be discovered. However, he could not be told till evening, as he was gone to spend the day at

Hitchin, actually to engage a good-for-nothing priest (who had changed his religion since the last reign) to marry us. All this day my situation was none of the pleasantest.

Towards evening, Anthony relieved me from my confinement, and conducted me to the farthest of the tapestry apartments, where I found refreshments and a bed made up on the floor. Anthony gave me the key to lock him out, and desired I would sleep free from fear. When he was gone, being faint more than sleepy, I satisfied my hunger, and threw myself on the bed in a state of mind I cannot describe, and thus fell into a doze, from which I was awakened by a noise at the door, and Anthony's voice. I rose and opened it, and immediately found myself in my Aunt's arms, who embraced me more kindly than ever she had done before. After the first enquiries were over, I found Anthony had confided to my Aunt the supposed secret of my death, and seeing her almost distracted with the news, he had then told her the truth, at which she was as much overjoyed. It was agreed that I should go home as soon as ever Anthony could find an opportunity to take me safely; and, in the mean time, to remain concealed in that room, which I could very well, as nobody now ventured up the turret stairs but he.

The next day my Lady, Deborah, and Dunlop were a little composed by being told I was buried, and that everything had been removed from the apartment that could lead to suspicion, and it was very lucky, for that day came a horseman to foretell the arrival of my Lady Loftus, a favourite at Court, and a person of the very first consequence in the eyes of Lady L——.

All hands were set to work to provide for their entertainment, and their attention a little diverted from the late *melancholy event*. My Lady Loftus came at the appointed time, attended by some others; amongst whom was her fine daughter, who was to marry the Squire. Great lamentations were made at his absence, and my Lady was eager after dinner to fly all over the fine house which was to be her daughter's. The picture-gallery, to be sure, must not be forgotten, where all Sir Rowland's ancestors were drawn out in battle array. My Lady desired Deborah and Dunlop to follow her, not much relishing herself to go with them; nor they either, as it was so near the scene of my despair and their cruelty. Being warned of their intention, I took care to be in my old apartment, at the same time, with my spinning-wheel and a hank of yarn, drawing it out with as much noise as ever I could, however, they did not hear me till they came near the inner carved door, when the noise striking them, as if coming from the restless spirit of the poor murdered spinner, the three were all aghast, expecting, I suppose, to see my ghost appear every moment. My Lady looked so pale, and so near fainting, that burnt feathers were called for in all haste, which Deborah and Dunlop ran away to fetch as if Satan had been after them, glad enough to get out of the room. My Lady recovering, motioned to return to the drawing-room. For my part, I was half inclined to accuse myself of the mischief I had occasioned. Anthony, that clever fellow, well foreseeing the consequences, had prepared the servants' minds by something of the sort, at dinner; for one of the men giving my health by the name of "Jenny the Spinner," a name I had got by being employed the last three months in spinning thread for a fine piece of table linen, Anthony put on a look of consternation, and sighing deeply, said nothing but "Alas, poor Jenny! Heaven rest her soul!" and then went out of the hall: these words and looks set all the maidens whispering.

In the evening, he brings all the men into the picture-gallery, the maids, to be sure, followed; and my first trick, accompanied by deep sighs, and two or three hollow groans, succeeded so well that every son and daughter of Eve left the gallery, planet-struck, as it were, with fear, though they knew not exactly why or wherefore. Aunt and Uncle were obliged to produce some of their choicest cordials to recover their hurried spirits. Many of them talked of leaving their places that very night, but Aunt and Uncle persuaded them to stay till Sir Rowland's return. Not one had a clear idea of what they were frightened at, but they had put the several circumstances together of Deborah's alarm in the morning, the strange appearance of my Lady, Deborah, and Dunlop, their known persecution of me, and my dislike of the latter, my sudden departure, some hints of foul play, the lights and appearances in

the turret which led to this apartment; above all, my late occupation of spinning: these altogether made me connected, in their heads, with the horrors of the last forty-eight hours.

The next day all moved about in parties, none daring to go alone; all mysteriously talked of poor Jenny Spinner, and all had recourse to the butler's and housekeeper's cordials at night, pretending they could not sleep without.

My Lady Loftus—who was, and is still, the most active person at Court—finding my Lady so very dull, and the gentlemen out, pretended she had engagements at Hatfield, and so set off next morning in her coach-and-four, promising to return to Knebworth the next week, when the Squire would be come back.

I staid at Knebworth two days longer, during which time the servants had, by degrees, introduced into the gallery all their intimate friends in Knebworth and the hamlets round about, where I was always at hand with my spinning-wheel. To them they communicated all their suspicions, under, however, a strict promise of secrecy, which each one religiously kept until he or she arrived at their own or their neighbour's fireside, where the story of poor Jenny Spinner was retailed, with considerable additions, round the hearth of every cottage in the neighbourhood.

My Lady proposing that Anthony should go to meet Sir Rowland, in order to prepare him to disbeheve any reports that might reach him with respect to Jenny Spinner, it was resolved by my Aunt that I should go with him, as Sir Rowland was visiting about six miles beyond my village This determination somewhat affected me and so, thought I, this is the end of my story! I must return to poverty and obscurity, and Anthony remain in servitude: so my enemies have got their way at last. "Oh, Jenny, thou hadst better have staid for ever in thy poor cottage, with thy good mother, and never have known what grandeur was." I even grieved at being obliged to give up wearing my fine clothes ever again

Well, but the way I was to escape was not quite so easy to contrive. Anthony proposed my putting on a new suit brought home for one of the stable boys; and my Aunt even seemed to think it a good scheme.

But I said, "Anthony, do you know what you are saying? Could you ever look upon me again if I were to do such a thing? Should I ever be fit to be the wife of an honest man, after committing an offence against decency which nothing could excuse but fear of my life? No, please God, I will go away as I came, an honest maiden, in my old linsey woolsey."

Anthony has since told me he liked me better when I said this than ever he did before.

Well, at last I will tell you how I got clear off. The afternoon, at dusk, I descended the turret stairs, dressed just as I was the day I left the house, but holding before me a pewter plate filled with salt and spirits of wine, and set on fire, which lighted my whole figure, and made my face look green, blue, and yellow, exactly like a corpse I concealed the edges of the plate with my cloak, so no one could see where the light came from. Thus equipped, I came down into the great court, passed through the colonnade, and round into the great hall, and who should be in the music gallery but Dunlop himself, Deborah, and a housemaid! All stood like statues, horror-struck; the housemaid indeed squalled out and fainted before I got away, whilst Dunlop sank down upon his knees half dead.

I passed on, crossed the court again, and went straight to the garden, flying down the broad walk, for fear of pursuit, like a lapwing At the great gates I found Anthony, who placed me behind him on a horse, and we got away without molestation, and arrived safe at home But, good Sirs, what a thunderbolt! Sir Rowland himself in our cottage My mother with a long letter open in her hand, which she seemed to have been reading to him, and looking out of her wits with joy when she saw us.

And now I must stop to tell you that good Aunt and her husband had set down on a sheet of letter paper what had been done every day about me, beginning when I positively refused to marry Dunlop; and they would have managed to let my mother know, only that Anthony always had said, "Trust to me, no harm shall come to Jenny; I will undertake to get her safe out and safe home, for I am practising to be a General; I am manœuvring to deliver the innocent

captive, and to root up the plots of the wicked enemy."

The letter ended with telling when he would bring me home. Mrs Fitton had sent it by a trusty youth on horseback Sir Rowland had had it all read to him by the time I arrived.

Oh, I must not forget to tell the providential cause of his coming there. Biddy was my favourite amongst the servants; the groom that went with Sir Rowland and the young Squire was her sweetheart, and when they got so near home as their visit to Harfield, she had an opportunity of sending a little parcel to him, which was nothing but the purse which Sir Rowland dropt when he saw me first with the primroses, and she got somebody to write just this line for her "Poor Mistress Jenny is dead This "purse was in her pocket, and given to "me; we had every one something out "of it. Oh, John, I've so much dreadful "to tell you when you come home."

Now John Groom was with his master when he dropt his purse; he had often seen it in his hand, and he was quite aware that his money was loose in his pocket when his master dropt his purse There was altogether something quite of a mystery He determined, like an honest, sensible fellow as he was, to show both purse and note to Sir Rowland And if you had but heard his description of how he took it He turned quite pale, and ordered his horse to be got ready and brought directly to the door, took a hasty leave of my Lord, ordered the groom to stay and bring home the young Squire, and away he rode direct for my mother's cottage

I shall never forget her description of how he came in

"How's this, Mrs. Hooper? your daughter dead!"

My mother was in the middle of reading Aunt Fitton's letter, and could cry out at once, "Oh no, Sir, she is alive, and I expect her here directly She is saved—she owes her life, maybe, to Master Crofts"

By the time she had read out Aunt's letter to Sir Rowland, we came

It was so good he should know every thing before we got home, and I was especially glad that he should read a postscript at the end of the letter, which was just these words: "I've just been told by some one who knows, or makes out everything in this house and the village, that Dunlop has been trying to insinuate that Jenny was Sir Rowland's daughter, which notion was put into my Lady's mind both by him and Deborah, so my poor Lady must be excused if she took desperate measures to save her own son from falling in love with his sister." Poor dear lady, she was so kind to me afterwards I love her almost as well as I do Sir Rowland.

Well, when we reached home, my mother took me into the house, and Anthony followed Oh, I shall never forget how grand he looked when he stood bolt upright before Sir Rowland

He told me afterwards he had thought it very likely he might have been displeased, and dismissed him from his service; but he felt so strong in the right, he lifted up his heart to God, and feared nothing, and he had no need to fear.

Good Sir Rowland I can never forget. His eyes quite filled with tears, and he took Anthony's hand and shook it heartily. As soon as he could speak (for he quite cried) he said, "How is Jenny to be recompensed for all she has suffered, and how are you to be rewarded for all you have done?"

As he was saying this, without knowing what I did, I took hold of Anthony's hand I held it so tight that he turned his head and smiled rather, and Sir Rowland saw it, and smiled too, and said, "I see you must reward one another On my part I have to say that the friend of dear Jenny Doveton is my friend; and moreover, no truer, nobler hearts do I acknowledge for my friends than those of Anthony Crofts and Jenny Doveton God bless you both! Anthony, you are no longer a page, but hold a commission in your country's army."

A few years afterwards, my dear Anthony was knighted in the field, and soon after Dame Jane Lady Crofts, and the gallant Sir Anthony, my Ladyship in our coach with a little master, and the gallant Sir Anthony on a prancing charger, drew up in state before the very great gates through which, a few years before, we, a poor serving man and maid, had fled in the darkness of the night, in fear of discovery and pursuit, and without friends or money, and we were attended by Deborah and Dunlop (since married) with all obsequious respect

The Knebworth of to-day

The Great Hall

Photos by A. Elsden, Hertford

A STORY OF THE SUPER-NORMAL.

PARMENAS FILMER awoke in the bedroom of his seaside lodgings at Weymouth

From the bed in which he lay the sea was usually visible, but on this particular August morning it was shrouded by a dense white veil

All through the night his sleep had been disturbed by the prolonged wail of distant sirens, there must have been a heavy fog out at sea, and instinctively his thoughts flew to Isolde Le Vazon, who was probably at that very moment preparing to land on her native Guernsey, where—unless the unexpected happened —she would be henceforth as far removed from him as if she were on some Pacific isle.

How fascinating she had been, with her strange spiritual loveliness, her air of dreamy melancholy! He recalled their first meeting—only a brief fortnight ago—in a glazed shelter on the Esplanade, he traced back each stage of their progress towards the sweetest intimacy.

Never till then, although he was in his twenty-sixth year, had he met the woman who answered to his ideal, but in Isolde Le Vazon he had found her once for all Her beauty was of the mystic and *morbidezza* type that had always most appealed to him, she was high-strung, romantic, her literary taste was exquisite. No one before had ever shown such perfect appreciation of his poetry—for he wrote verses when he was not engaged in the uncongenial duties of the Inland Revenue Department, in which, on leaving Oxford, he had obtained a superior clerkship.

Short as their acquaintance had been, and limited as were their opportunities of meeting—for she had come to Weymouth to attend an invalid aunt by whose sick bed most of her day was necessarily passed—he had allowed himself to declare his passion, and Isolde had confessed that, in happier circumstances, she might have returned it

Unhappily she was already engaged, to a certain Mr Taudevin, whom, if she could not love, she respected as one of the largest tomato-growers in all Guernsey.

Isolde had more rigid views than many of her sex upon the binding nature of an engagement, holding that to withdraw from it, unless expressly released by the other party to the contract, was as culpable for a girl as for a man

But she had promised to lay the case

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before Mr Taudevin as soon after her return to Guernsey as possible, and should he consent to set her free, which she warned Parmenas was in the highest degree improbable, all obstacles between them would be removed. On the other hand, should her *fiancé* insist on holding her to her word, she was resolved to sacrifice herself at the call of duty.

All she asked in that event was that she might have the consolation of feeling that Parmenas would be ever constant to her memory, and that no other would ever replace her in his heart, which he found it easy to promise, feeling that she was and would always be the one love of his life.

He was by nature rather a dreamer than a man of action, and the idea of a lifelong and hopeless passion was not without a certain attraction for his peculiar temperament.

Then the end had come. Isolde had been suddenly summoned back to Guernsey, and he had seen her off the night before. Never could he forget that last parting on the deck of the *Chamois*. She had been more sadly, sweetly emotional than ever—oppressed by a presentiment she could not shake off that they were destined never to meet again on earth, pitying him for the loneliness he would have to endure when she was taken from him.

"But I will come back to you, Parmenas—if I am permitted," she had said, with an inspired look in her uplifted eyes. "You shall not be quite desolate. Some day, perhaps, you will find a little white dove tapping ever so gently at your window. Don't drive it away, for it will be your poor Isolde, trying to tell you that she is dead, and that her last thought was of you!"

She had been almost overcome by her own pathos, and he himself had been deeply affected. "But the dove will fly away again," he had said, "and I shall be lonelier than ever!"

"Who knows? Perhaps I shall be allowed to stay and comfort you," she had whispered: "at least, till the time comes when you learn to care for—for somebody else, Parmenas, and then—then you will see a poor little white bird lying in a corner, quite, quite dead. You might write one of your little poems on that, mightn't you? But I mustn't be sentimental. After all, I mayn't die first; Mr Taudevin may release me, and we may be happy together all our lives. Only somehow, to-night, I can't help feeling as if something were going to happen. Promise that, whatever happens, you will be constant, Parmenas!"

If he thought her fears fantastic, her project of returning to him in the form of a bird slightly unpractical, he merely loved her the better for them; so he had sworn undying fidelity, and, as she declined to go below, he had wrapped her up in rugs and shawls in a covered bench on deck, and returned sadly to his lodgings. He lay still, thinking of all this, trying to summon up her looks and the least things she had said and done, until his eyes closed and he fell asleep once more.

When he awoke again he became aware that something was in his room. He could not see it, but he heard a curious fluttering noise which seemed to proceed from the floor. Raising himself on his elbow, he looked, and was startled for the moment to see a large greyish bird perched on the edge of his bath, and gazing at him with fearless brown eyes. It was a remarkably fine specimen of the common gull (*Larus canus*).

He had slept, according to his custom, with the window open, and the bird had evidently lost its bearings in the fog and flown in. He went towards it, but it did not budge; it allowed him to take it up and put it on the window-sill, without attempting to fly away. One of its wings drooped slightly, as if it had struck against something in the darkness and bruised itself.

It was still there when he had finished dressing, and humanity forbade him to drive it away in its crippled condition, so he consulted his landlady, who undertook to borrow a wicker cage from a neighbour who had recently lost a pet jackdaw.

The cage was brought, and the gull was easily persuaded to enter it, upon which Filmer sat down to breakfast and soon forgot the incident. After a merely perfunctory meal he wandered along the esplanade, feeding his melancholy by the sight of the shelter in which he had so often sat with Isolde. She had been reading a library novel that first morning, he remembered: it was "Ardath," by Miss Marie Corelli, of whose genius she was an ardent admirer. Now a fat woman sat there, knitting a woollen stocking.

But as the morning passed, Filmer,

even in his abstracted state, was conscious of an unusual stir and excitement in the passing crowd; presently he caught scraps of talk that filled him with vague uneasiness, until he could not refrain from asking if anything had happened.

Something had indeed happened. News had just come that the *Chamois* had run upon the Casket rocks in the fog, and gone to the bottom—it was rumoured, with all on board.

What Filmer felt at this crushing blow need not be set down here; his reason tottered under it, and might have left him altogether, had not more reassuring tidings arrived later in the day. The passengers were all safe after all—at least, all the ship's boats but one had reached land, and, as the sea was perfectly calm, no fears were entertained for the remaining boat, which was known to have been successfully launched, and had probably steered for the French coast.

To Filmer the relief was considerable, even though he could not help remembering Isolde's presentiment the night before. But presentiments are not infallible, and the chances were immensely in favour of her having been in one of the boats that had turned up.

However, the list of names was published, and Isolde Le Vazon's was not among them, and nothing more had been heard of the missing boat.

Even then he clung to hope, for the general opinion was that it had been picked up by some outward-bound vessel. And yet there was one thing which, whenever his eye fell upon it, struck a chill of superstitious dread into his inmost soul—it was the gull in its wicker cage.

Try as he might, he could not conquer a suspicion that it might be connected in a manner that he had little imagined at first with the fate of his beloved Isolde. Had she not promised to return to him if permitted, in the shape of a bird? Had not this creature flown into his window at the very hour the disaster must have happened?

But Isolde had mentioned a white dove—and this was a grey gull—he would not despair yet, especially as the lost boat might still prove to have been rescued.

And soon this hope was justified by news of it from Malta. A liner had arrived there with some sailors and a lady and a gentleman passenger belonging to the ill-fated *Chamois*; and Filmer breathed more freely, for he never doubted, though the names were not given, that the lady was Isolde.

Alas! this certainty of his was only too speedily shattered. The two passengers were a newly wedded couple of the name of Goldingham, who had been intending to make a short tour in the Channel Islands before returning to their home in South Africa.

Doubt was no longer possible. Isolde's prediction had been tragically fulfilled; she had perished in the confusion, probably whilst sleeping soundly in the covered seat which she had insisted on occupying.

And the gull? . . . He reproached himself now for his blindness and want of faith. What though it were not precisely the bird she would have chosen as the tenement of her spirit? Gulls are more frequent at sea than white doves, and in her urgent desire to come to him she would naturally avail herself of the first means that offered themselves.

"Isolde!" he cried, as he knelt by the wicker cage, "is it indeed you? Have you come back to me as you promised? Tell me it is true!"

A sort of ripple passed through the gull's plumage, but she made no other answer.

"You are mine now!" he said with exultation—"mine for ever! So long as you are with me, I need no other companion. None shall come between you and me. Only give me some sign, to tell me you understand."

The gull gave a little shrug, so startlingly like a gesture of Isolde's when she had affected to doubt his protestations, that even a sceptic must have been convinced.

Henceforth he resolved to cherish this bird for the sake of the spirit that informed it—just as the Duchess of Kendal, we are told, cherished the great raven that flew into her window at Twickenham after the demise of King George I. He did not conceal from himself that the situation had its difficulties: the most ordinary prudence required that his strange secret should be concealed from all the world, and yet, even in public, he could not bring himself to treat his transformed divinity as the mere sea-fowl whose semblance she had adopted.

It was impossible, for instance, when he took her up to town, to allow her to be put in the luggage van, and, as it is not every first-class passenger who appreciates a sea-gull as a fellow-traveller, the

"'But I will come back to you, Parmenas—if I am permitted' she had said, with an inspired look in her uplifted eyes"

journey was scarcely an agreeable experience. He felt some natural embarrassment, too, on presenting himself to the astonished housekeeper in his rooms at Spring Gardens carrying his adored Isolde in a large wicker cage; and he shuddered when the good woman protested against being expected to undertake the care of what she was pleased to describe as "poultry."

However, as soon as Isolde was safely established in his rooms, he set himself to render her new existence as tolerable as possible. He procured for her a spacious and handsome cage, a portion of which he curtained off, so as to ensure the privacy essential to a delicate-minded female; and from the satisfied air with which she pecked the hangings he could see that she was grateful for his forethought.

He also altered the furniture and decoration of his bachelor's den, until it was more in harmony with what he conceived to be her taste, though he failed to detect any indication in her manner that she was gratified by, or even observed, his efforts to please her. But she appeared to appreciate her food-dish, a tray of genuine old Canton enamel, and her antique Venice drinking-glass, which, remembering that at Weymouth she had once expressed a passion for *bric-à-brac*, he had picked up at a curiosity dealer's in Wardour Street.

With such a new and absorbing interest in his life, Filmer could not fairly be called unhappy; he did his work at the office with his customary intelligence, even though longing inwardly for the hour to strike which set him free to return to the cage which contained his Isolde.

He had never been fond of society, now he went nowhere; he was quite content to pass all his evenings at home, reading Shelley aloud to her, for her fine sensitiveness to what was best and highest in literature had not deserted her, and she seldom failed to greet the most inspired passages with a low croak of rapturous approval. When, on the other hand, he ventured to read her some little composition of his own she was more critical, and it was a proud moment for him when she was so carried away by a stanza of his as to spread her wings and utter a squawk of unmistakable enthusiasm.

Yes, on the whole these evenings were characterised by tranquil yet real happiness.

* * * * *

He had come home early from the office one Saturday afternoon, and was reading "Epipsychidion" to the gull, which was listening voluptuously with closed eyes, when he was unceremoniously interrupted by a visitor. The intruder was a fellow-clerk of his—a certain Frank Challis, who had been up at Oxford with him, and with whom, before his eventful holiday at Weymouth, he had been on terms of some intimacy. Filmer had frequently dined with Challis's people at their house in Craven Hill Gardens, and had always been glad when Frank looked him up for a smoke and a confidential chat of an evening.

But of late he had rather avoided him, from a feeling that his boisterous high spirits and reckless talk would grate upon Isolde's refined ear.

"What ho! old chap," began Challis. "So you're all alone, eh? Thought I heard you jawing to somebody."

"I was reading aloud—to myself," explained Filmer, a little awkwardly, for he could not very well admit that he had been reading poetry to a gull.

"What the deuce have you done to your 'digs'?—they look more like a woman's boudoir than a fellow's rooms. I say—I don't want to be inquisitive—but you aren't *married*, by any chance?"

"No," said Filmer with a sad smile, "I shall never be that—now." And he glanced at the gull.

"Oh, it's too soon to chuck up yet!" said Frank. "So you've started an aviary. Going in for keeping canaries? . . . Why, you've got a *gull* in it—a common gull, by gad!"

"Excuse me," said Filmer, stiffly, "it is by no means a common gull."

"Well, it's evident you think so, or you wouldn't give it enamel and coloured glass to eat and drink out of—and a Japanese bronze to tub in—and frilled curtains to go to bed behind. Great Scott! you'll provide it with a toilet-table next!"

"I fail to see what business it would be of yours, if I did," said Filmer, irritably.

"My dear old chap, you needn't get shirty about it. Can you give me a cigar? I've come out without mine."

"I'm sorry," said Filmer, "but I've quite given up smoking." Which was true, for Isolde had once told him that she could not endure the smell of tobacco.

"Oh, it doesn't matter—I've got a pipe." And Challis was proceeding to light up, when Filmer felt obliged, in Isolde's interests, to beg him to forbear. Then, to his horror, Frank began to tell him a good story he had just heard which had originated on the Stock Exchange, and which Filmer instinctively felt would prove unsuited to Isolde's delicate sense of propriety, so he hastened to say that anecdotes of that kind did not appeal to his sense of humour.

"I never knew you had one," said Frank. "And you might tell this story

Filmer did remember Doriel as a rather engaging tom-boy with a cloud of tawny hair, who had made him play tennis and cycle and skate with her, and had chaffed him unmercifully for his want of proficiency in all these exercises. He did not feel inclined to meet her just then.

"She's grown up now," Frank went on—"come out, and all that. And though I *am* her brother, I will say she's turned out a 'ripper.' She's simply A1 at hockey!"

But Filmer pleaded an engagement for that evening, and just then the servant

"He was startled to see a large greyish bird perched on the edge of his bath"

to a maiden aunt—a *frisky* maiden aunt. However, it's too good to be wasted on *you!*"

The gull had cocked her head on one side with an air of expectation, and, if Filmer had not known Isolde so well, he would almost have imagined she was disappointed. But then, of course, she could not know what she had been spared!

"Do you know, old man," said Frank presently, with concern in his honest face, "it strikes me you want rousing. Can't be healthy for you, shutting yourself up like this. Why not come and dine quietly with us? Doriel's back from Dresden now—you remember Doriel?"

entered with a tray on which were some scalloped oysters daintily served in a silver shell. "Mrs. Trotman is very sorry, sir," said the girl, "but she couldn't send up the gull's lunch any earlier."

"The gull's lunch!" exclaimed Challis, after the servant had departed. "You do that bird devilish well! Never heard of giving a gull scalloped oysters before. It don't seem to take very kindly to 'em, though."

The bird was, indeed, merely toying with the bread-crumbed morsels—for, as Isolde had frequently informed Filmer, she regarded all food with indifference and even repugnance.

"They have kept her waiting for her lunch till nearly tea-time," he said: "no wonder she has no appetite. And she is a delicate feeder at the best of times."

"Rats!" said Frank, with distressing coarseness. "You try her with a fat slug or two!"

It need hardly be said that Filmer repudiated this profane suggestion with indignant horror.

"I tell you I *know*," persisted Frank; "I kept a tame gull myself when I was a kid. It's no use giving 'em kickshaws. Slugs and snails and worms are the grub *they* like!"

"I suppose," said Filmer, with dignity, "you'll allow *me* to be the best judge of what food my gull prefers."

"Oh, you can take her to dine at Prince's or the Carlton, for all *I* care!" retorted Challis, as he rose to go. "But I bet you anything I'm right!"

As soon as he had gone Filmer hastened to apologise to Isolde for the outrageous insults which she had been forced to endure, and he resumed his reading of "Epipsychidion"—only to be a second time interrupted by the irrepressible Frank, who was so bent on proving to him that his views upon what constituted a gull's favourite diet were mistaken that he had actually taken the trouble to go all the way to a naturalist's shop in Drury Lane and procure an assortment of slugs and worms in a tin box for experimental purposes.

Worse still, he insisted, despite Filmer's protests, on emptying the box into Isolde's cage.

Instead of going into violent hysterics, as Filmer had fully expected, she sidled delicately up to a worm of particularly unprepossessing exterior, and absorbed it with unaffected gusto.

"Bravo, old girl!" cried Frank. "Now let's see if you can put away a slug!"

And, after a little coquettish hesitation, Isolde *did* put away a slug—several slugs, in fact.

"Didn't I *tell* you!" said Challis triumphantly. "Perhaps you'll believe me now?"

"I do," said Filmer heavily, as he saw him to the door, "I do. And," he added awkwardly in a lower tone, "if you'll let me change my mind, I *will* come and dine with you this evening. It may cheer me up."

"Right-oh!" said Frank heartily. "We shall all be delighted to see you—especially Doriel. I won't tell her about the gull, old chap, or she might rot you." And Filmer felt grateful to him for this forbearance.

Calmer reflection convinced him of the injustice of blaming his Isolde for tastes which were probably inseparable from the nature of the bird she had chosen to inhabit, and he took care that in future she should be provided with the kind of sustenance she evidently preferred.

But he read her no more Shelley.

He spent a pleasanter evening at Craven Hill Gardens than he had anticipated. Doriel was no longer the pretty romp he remembered. She had become an extremely charming young woman, and the frank friendliness with which she received him was soothing to his overstrung nerves.

It was late when he returned to his rooms. Isolde was sleeping peacefully on her perch, her beak pointing towards her tail, and the sight of her filled him with compunction. Would she slumber so serenely if she knew where he had been and how completely he had forgotten her?

He resolved to see no more of Doriel in future—and, for a time, he kept his resolution.

Unfortunately, Isolde either could not or would not make any effort to be an intellectual companion to him. She seemed fond of him, in her way, but gradually all her former sprightliness deserted her, and there were times when he feared that she found him a bore.

Nothing, it is well known, is so calculated to estrange affection as the mere suspicion that we bore our beloved, and Filmer was not long in realising that the boredom was, to say the least, reciprocal.

What wonder, then, that he should sometimes seek solace and recreation in the sight of Doriel's winsome face, in the sound of her gay chatter? He did not mention this to the gull, because she would not have understood it; but when with Doriel he endeavoured to convey that some hidden sorrow had set him apart from all other men, and that his heart was dead to all earthly love.

He honestly believed this himself, and hoped that she realised it also, until an evening came which revealed to him the peril to which they were both unconsciously drifting. He was dining at Craven Hill Gardens, and, as usual, his place was next to Doriel. On her other

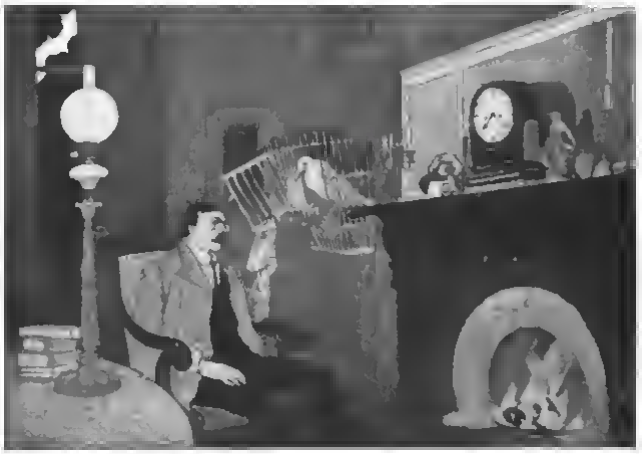
side sat a young man of the name of Mowbray, a good looking, athletic, if somewhat unintellectual youth, who was obviously attracted by Miss Doriel, and in whom she might have been expected to take at least a passing interest.

Filmer had honestly sought to efface himself by directing his conversation to his other neighbour, and replying to Doriel's overtures with a brevity that only just escaped brusqueness, but she declined to be repulsed, and exerted all her very considerable powers of witchery to subdue him, entirely neglecting the unfortunate Mowbray

and he was pledged, solemnly pledged, to lifelong constancy to Isolde!

Isolde was awake that evening; she had evidently been sitting up for him, and he could scarcely bring himself to meet her bright, reproachful eye. "I know what you would say if you could," he faltered apologetically, "and I deserve it. I *have* neglected you shamefully of late. I will do so no more. In future, Isolde, *all* my evenings shall be passed with you!"

Isolde explored the region under her wing with her beak—it was a mannerism of hers which had often distressed him—



"He was quite content to pass all his evenings at home, reading Shelley aloud to her."

To his consternation, Filmer found that his heart was very much alive after all, and for the remainder of the dinner, and even upstairs in the drawing-room afterwards, he surrendered himself entirely to Doriel's charm, and was rather stimulated than otherwise by observing the increasing gloom on young Mowbray's ingenuous countenance.

But on his way home the inevitable reaction followed.

He saw, in a flash, that he was fast falling in love with Doriel, that, should she continue this encouragement, nothing would save him from proposing to her—

before she raised her head and gazed intently at him for an instant. Then her glittering eye slowly disappeared in the soft down that surrounded it—and he felt that she was appeased, and that he was forgiven.

* * * * *

Doubtless a more prosaic and practical mind than Filmer's would have rebelled against the fate which required him to abandon all hope of married felicity, and be content to remain platonically bound for life to a mere bird. But to his exalted and mystical nature such abnegation seemed an obvious duty.

After all, Isolde had made the greater sacrifice in voluntarily projecting herself into the body of a bird so grossly unromantic in its captive state as a sea-gull. She must be suffering at least as much as himself for her generous impetuosity, and he was determined never to vex her gentle spirit again by ingratitude or unfaithfulness.

Accordingly—much as it cost him—he kept away from the Challises, hoping that in time they would understand that he preferred to be left in solitude.

And his renunciation did not go altogether unrewarded, for it really seemed as if the gull were trying to do her best to fill the blank in his life. She grew gentler, more subdued, every day; the brisk perkiness that had once repelled him disappeared; she even overcame her voracious appetite, as though in deference to his prejudices—he was touched to observe that she could scarcely be prevailed upon now to dally with the most tempting slug.

The year drew to its close, and he had almost succeeded in putting Doriel out of his thoughts, when one Sunday afternoon the maid-servant suddenly opened the door and announced: "Mr. and Miss Challis"—and Filmer sprang to his feet with a wild joy, which he could only hope escaped the gull's observant eye.

"We've just been to service at the Abbey," explained Doriel, looking more bewitching than ever in a highly becoming black hat and sables, "and I insisted on Frank bringing me on here to ask you what you mean by neglecting us for weeks and weeks."

"I *told* her you had one of your unsociable fits on, and didn't want to be bothered," said Frank, "but she *would* come. She will have it that you're offended with us."

Filmer stammered something incoherent as he offered them tea. He did not think the gull could object to his doing that.

"You *know* you're glad to see us!" said Doriel; "confess you were feeling horribly lonely up here!"

"Not he!" laughed Frank. "He's got his beloved gull to keep him company."

"A gull?" cried Doriel. "So *that's* what you keep in that cage there. What a queer sort of pet! Is it amusing? Can it do any tricks?"

Her light tone jarred on Filmer just then. He replied, somewhat shortly, that a gull was hardly on the same footing as a performing canary.

"How dull!" said Doriel, going up to the cage. "I should have thought a cockatoo would be more cheerful for you than a mopy creature like this. I'd no idea gulls were such ugly things. What makes it flap its wings at me like that?"

"She is not accustomed to hearing such extremely personal remarks," said Filmer coldly.

"You say that as if you thought she understood what I said!" exclaimed Doriel, raising her pretty eyebrows.

"And if I do, Miss Challis," he replied, "perhaps I have my reasons."

"I'm sorry," said Doriel with provoking good-humour. "I apologise. Do you hear, gull?—I apologise. And just to show there's no ill-feeling, you may come and perch on my finger."

She had already stripped off her glove, and, before Filmer could interfere, she had thrust her slim white hand into the gull's cage. . . . The temptation was too much for Isolde: she struck viciously at her rival's forefinger with her sharp yellow beak, and Doriel drew back her hand with a little cry of pain. "See what your horrid bird has done to me!" she said, exhibiting the wound to him with a childishly pathetic *moue*, and he longed to seize the injured hand and cover it with kisses, but loyalty to Isolde forbade. It was not Doriel, standing there in her fresh young beauty, that most deserved his pity, but rather the lonely grey bird fluttering in a paroxysm of impotent jealousy.

"*Any* bird would be frightened," he said, clumsily enough, "when you put your hand in like that."

"I suppose I ought to have known," said Doriel, with a distinct change of manner, "but you see I'd no idea my poor hand was quite such a hideous object. Frank, will you lend me your handkerchief and bind it up—as Mr. Filmer doesn't seem to think it worth troubling himself about?"

"I say! it's bleeding like blazes!" cried her brother, binding up the finger, as the unhappy Filmer stood there, too paralysed to offer his services. "You poor little girl! Upon my soul, Filmer," he added indignantly, "it would serve that brute right if you were to wring its beastly neck for it. I'd do it myself for twopence!"

"Touch her if you dare!" cried Filmer, exasperated beyond all self-control. "It was not *her* fault, she was provoked — deliberately, wantonly provoked! You—you don't know what she *is* to me!"

"Apparently not," said Doriel. "I think we won't wait for tea, Frank. Mr. Filmer doesn't seem to be quite himself this afternoon."

Filmer made no attempt to detain them—he felt it would be useless. As soon as they were gone he turned to Isolde, who had quieted down again. "Are you satisfied *now?*" he cried fiercely. "I *loved* that girl—do you hear? I own it; and I have let her go,—for your sake. You need not fear that she will ever come between us in future; that accursed beak of yours has alienated her for ever. But oh, Isolde, think—is it fair to demand this from me? Must you *always* remain a bird? Can you not comfort me in some less incongruous shape? I implore you at least to make an effort!"

As he said this he heard a sound behind him, and turned, to see Doriel Challis standing in the doorway.

"I—I fancy I must have dropped my glove here," she said, and he noticed that she was deadly pale.

"Did you hear,"—he asked her,—"did you hear anything?"

"Everything," she admitted. "I—I came back, really, to tell you—— but that doesn't matter now. Parmenas, you mustn't give way to these morbid ideas—I can't *bear* it! Get rid of that wretched bird—to please me!"

She was tempting him—Doriel was tempting him—to some unspeakable infamy, but he felt just then that he was proof against all her wiles. "I will not!" he cried. "I have sworn to be constant, and I will be! Nothing on earth shall make me part from my Isolde, so long as she chooses to remain with me."

"You will never be happy till you do," entreated Doriel. "Dear, dear Parmenas, *don't* make me miserable! Come to me to-morrow and tell me that it is over—that you are your own self again. Then I shall have something to tell *you*."

And so she left him; but her spell over him was broken by the callous selfishness of her request. She knew all now, and yet she could urge him to destroy (for what else could her words mean?) this bird which stood in her way.

"No, Isolde," he murmured, "I may be weak—but I am not so weak as that. She has made me yours once more. I love her no longer. *This* time my heart will never waver from you again!"

But the gull made no response; she was strangely still, he thought. It was growing dark, and he lit a candle and peered into the cage. . . . There she lay at the bottom, her wings spread, her eyes dull and filmy, her yellow beak partly open, her crumpled feet already stiffening.

She was quite dead. Isolde's spirit had, as she had once predicted, been unable to bear the revelation of his inconstancy.

* * * * *

In the first ecstasy of his remorse Filmer had no sense of recovered freedom. On the contrary, he felt more irrevocably bound than ever. Wherever Isolde's spirit had betaken itself, he vowed that it should never again be grieved by the least inconstancy on his part. Perhaps, he thought, when she realised the sincerity of his repentance, she would return to him in some form more worthy of her.

And, that he might always have a safeguard at hand against further backsliding, he took the gull himself to be prepared and set up by one of the leading naturalists in London.

But the naturalist kept it a long time—and insensibly Filmer's thoughts began to recur to Doriel Challis. Had she really been so heartless as she seemed? She had only begged him to "get rid of" the gull: might she not merely have meant that he should part with it? If so, how unjust he had been to her! And what if Isolde had vacated the bird in pity for them both? In that case he was simply frustrating her generous intention.

His relations with Frank had, ever since that memorable Sunday afternoon, been of the most distant character; they never spoke to one another, except when the work of their department brought them in contact; but he saw no reason why he should not write to Doriel, and one evening in February, on his way home from the office, he made up his mind to do so.

But no sooner had he carried his reading-lamp to his bureau and sat down to write, than he fell back in his chair in stupefied dismay.

On the blank surface of his blotting-pad a sentence was traced in large

irregular letters which turned his heart sick and cold as he read. "*Could stay no longer. Will come back if possible.*—ISOLDE," ran the message.

She was coming back! In what form? Hardly the gull's—since that was in the hands of the stuffer. One thing only was clear—she had not intended to release him after all, and with that spirit-message staring him in the face it was impossible to write that letter to Doriel.

As he sat there trying to collect his scattered senses, there came three low raps at his door, which he knew were given by no maidservant; he tried to say "Come in," but his dry tongue refused to obey him. And the door opened slowly, and on the threshold stood a figure which, even in the comparative darkness, he knew could only be that of Isolde. At least, he thought, she had come in human shape this time.

"Have you no welcome for me, Parmenas?" she said, in the voice he so well remembered. "Or are you too utterly disgusted by the way I behaved?"

"If you refer to—to the slugs, Isolde," he replied, "forget them—as *I* do. I could not hold you responsible for the appetites of the form you assumed!"

"I'm afraid I don't understand," she said, and he perceived that she either did not remember, or did not choose to be reminded of, this incident in her recent *avatar*.

"You are thinking of how you pecked Doriel's—Miss Challis's hand?" he said. "It was a not unnatural outburst of jealousy—you had much provocation."

"I've no recollection of pecking any person's hand," she said. "And who is Miss Challis?"

"You cannot really have forgotten the girl who made uncomplimentary remarks on you when you were in that cage?" he replied. "*That* was Miss Challis."

"When I was in that cage?" she repeated slowly. "Parmenas! what *are* you talking about?"

"It will all come back to you," he said. "Think, Isolde! That last day, at Weymouth, when you solemnly promised that, if you should die before me, you would come to me in the form of a white dove—*now* don't you remember?"

"Did I ever really say anything so ridiculously sentimental?" she asked.

"Ah, don't scoff, Isolde! Because you kept your word. Yes, on that fatal night when the *Chamois* went down, a bird—not a white dove precisely, but a grey gull—flew in at my open window. I knew you at once—at least, *almost* at once. And I brought you here, and kept you in that very cage, till—till you could remain in the gull no longer. . . . So you *have* forgotten? No matter, since you have come back to me once more."

She threw herself rather suddenly in the nearest arm-chair (he would have offered it to her before but for an impression that spirits never sat down), and then—to his utter astonishment, for in life she had seldom relaxed even into a smile—she went into peal after peal of half-hysterical laughter.

At first he imagined that she was sobbing convulsively, but he soon recognised that he was mistaken.

"How could you have been so absurd?" she gasped, as soon as she could speak. "It's horrid of me to laugh—for it's really rather touching of you—but a *gull*! . . . Me! . . . Oh, it's quite too killing!"

"But it's true!" he assured her. "I could show you the gull, only it's being stuffed!"

This only set her off again. "But *I* wasn't in the thing!" she cried. "How *could* I be? Why, I do believe you've been taking me for a *ghost* all this time!"

"My poor Isolde," he said, endeavouring to break the truth to her as gently and considerately as he could, "can you really be unaware of—of your present state?"

"Don't be so silly!" she replied, petulantly. "How can I be a ghost when I'm not dead? There, take that green shade off the lamp, and look at me well. . . . *Now* do you see anything spectral about me?"

As she sat there in the white glare of the unshaded lamp, Filmer had to admit that she was indeed a creature of solid flesh and blood—almost too solid, in fact—for in her robust physique there were few traces of the fragile and almost diaphanous form of the Isolde of the previous August—there were even indications of an approaching double chin!

"Yes," he said, slowly, "I see now. You are no ghost, Isolde!"

"Perhaps you would have preferred that I *had* been?" she said.

He could not help feeling that he was pledged to her, and that she was here to

claim him;' but all he said was "*Isolde!* When I have been faithful to your memory all these weary months!"

"Are you quite sure that you *have* been faithful?" she asked. "*Honestly* now, Parmenas?"

"There may have been moments," he confessed, "when the gull failed to fill the aching void in my life."

"And then you fitted that Miss—what is her name? Challis, isn't it?—into the vacancy? I'm rather glad she got her hand pecked!"

"I am still yours," he said, "if you care to claim me."

"But supposing I don't—you would use your liberty to propose to this Challis girl? Well, you may do so, Parmenas—you are free."

"This is too generous!" he cried, in a burst of Quixotism. "No, Isolde, I cannot accept this sacrifice!"

"It's no sacrifice at all, because, as it happens, I am already another's."

"What?" he cried, with unspeakable relief. "You have married Mr. Taudevin, then?"

It was Isolde's turn to look embarrassed. "No, not him," she replied—"somebody else. Somebody who was on board the *Chamois* that night. I was in a covered seat on deck—he came and shared it with me. We discovered that we had much in common. When the crash came, he got me into one of the boats with a few sailors, and we drifted for days. He did not propose to me until we were reduced to the last Osborne biscuit; and, under the impression that, in any case, we had but a short time to live, I accepted him. The people on the liner that picked us up took us for a newly wedded couple, and, not wishing to be identified, I did not undeceive them. The fraud was a very innocent one, for as soon as we reached Malta I became Mrs. Goldingham."

"You might have let me know all this earlier," he said; "it would have spared me considerable inconvenience."

"I could not bear to shatter your ideal of me," she explained. "I felt that you would rather think of me as dead than know the truth. And there was Mr. Taudevin to be considered, too. But *he* has married since. Then I thought that, as I was about to return for the first time to South Africa, it was fairer perhaps to come and tell you that you needn't grieve for me any longer. So I came—only to find that you are faithless too. Ah, there is no such thing as constancy in men!"

"You would not say so," he remonstrated, "if you knew how I cherished that gull for your sake, Isolde!"

She began to laugh again. "I think there were—intervals," she said; "and I utterly decline to be responsible for the gull. But now neither of us will stand in your way any longer. I must run away now—or my husband will be asking inconvenient questions. . . . Good-bye, Parmenas—accept my best wishes!"

* * * * *

She was gone—and he was free, really free at last—to write to Doriel. Stay; why should he write, when he might go to her and plead his cause in person? In ten minutes he was on his way to Craven Hill Gardens in a hansom.

It was dark by the time he reached the house, but not so dark that he failed to notice a temporary awning over the front door. So the Challises were giving a dance, or an evening party. He had forfeited all right to an invitation, he knew, but he felt sure that he would have one, when once Doriel had realised that he was in his right mind at last, cured for ever of his fantastic delusion.

He asked for "Mr. Frank," meaning first to set himself right with Challis, who, he remembered now with some anxiety, had not been at the office that day. He could not be seriously ill, however, for the man-servant showed him into the billiard-room, where Frank was engaged in idly knocking the balls about.

He was clearly surprised to see Filmer, though he tried not to betray it. "Sit down, old chap," he said, as heartily as though there had been no coolness between them. "Sorry you couldn't turn up before—but better late than never!"

"I—I wasn't free to come before," said Filmer, and added, with a gulp, "I can't help being afraid that you and—and Doriel thought I behaved rather oddly—about that wretched gull, you know."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Frank, hurriedly. "Have you got rid of it at last, eh?"

"It died," said Filmer, simply. "I made a fearful ass of myself over it. I see that now!"

"Then don't say any more about it. *We* understood how it was," declared

Frank, who seemed unaccountably anxious to avoid the subject.

"But I must tell Doriel that—that I've come to my senses."

"You take my advice and leave things as they are," counselled Frank. "And anyway, you can't tell Doriel anything at present—she's half way to Dover by this time!"

"To Dover! what has she gone to Dover for?" asked Filmer, rendered inquisitive by disappointment.

"Well, they only stay the night there," said Frank, "on their way to the Italian Lakes."

"They?" said Filmer, "Has your mother gone *too*, then?"

"Not exactly!" said Frank, with a laugh; "Doriel and Cecil Mowbray—for their honeymoon. Didn't you know? I made sure you'd had an invitation. Doriel *meant* to send you one, I know."

For a moment the billiard table and lamps seemed to spin round giddily, and then Filmer heard himself saying, quite quietly and naturally, "No, I never got it. Did you say—Cecil Mowbray?"

"Yes, clinking good chap he is, too. You met him here the last time you dined with us—don't you remember? It was just beginning then. We dropped in to tell you the news that Sunday just before Christmas—only—well, we came away without doing it for some reason. Care to come up and have a look at the presents? They won't have put 'em away yet, and she's had some rather jolly ones."

But Filmer thought he had hardly time for it that evening.

"Well, I won't ask you to stay and dine to-night, because it would be rather poor fun for you—we shan't be over cheery, now Doriel's gone. You must come and meet them both when they're back from the honeymoon."

"Thanks," said Filmer, "I—I will, if I can. And when you're writing, will you tell—Mrs. Mowbray that I wish her every happiness?"

Some hours later he got back to Spring Gardens, after consuming a dismal dinner at an Italian restaurant, surprised to find that he could eat at all, and that he felt no particular emotion. But the truth was that he was still numbed by the shock he had undergone.

When he reached his sitting-room he found a large wooden box on his table, which he opened with no very clear notion of what might be inside.

It contained a glass case, in which, on a rock covered with dried seaweed and with a background imperfectly suggesting the boundless ocean, the gull was perched in a lifelike attitude.

She had been admirably stuffed, and in the glass eyes which challenged his he seemed to see a gleam of cynical mockery, as though the bird were exulting in the thought of the long and successful imposture by which she had obtained food and shelter, and the most reverent and unremitting attention—all under false pretences!

He felt a sudden impulse to destroy it then and there, and with it every vestige of his infatuation—he had already seized the poker for the purpose—and then his hand relaxed.

After all, it was childish as well as brutal to wreak vengeance on the Dead. Besides, this poor effigy had not deceived him—it was he who had deceived himself. And then he remembered how much she—if the bird *was* a female, for he had taken her sex for granted—had done to sustain him at the beginning of his imaginary bereavement, he thought of the patience with which she, a wild sea-bird, had endured captivity, of her fearless trust in him, and her dumb efforts to be a companion to him, and his heart softened.

Gull though she was, she was the one creature that had been constant to him to the end.

And so the glass case was suffered to remain intact—but not in Filmer's sitting-room: he felt he could not stand the ironical inquiry of those artificial eyes—and the stuffed gull now forms the most cherished ornament in his housekeeper's parlour.

In fact, the good woman appreciates it far more in its present condition than ever she did in the flesh, when, as she remarks—with more accuracy than she is aware of—"It couldn't have made more mess and trouble if it had been a Christian!"

MY LADY PEACOCK.

BY CHARLES MARRIOTT.

WHEN the last of the other men had left my room, Newington let himself go in a shuddering breath of relief. All that evening he had kept himself so perfectly in hand that no one but myself was aware of his unusual excitement. The other men, Rowles, Paynter and Protheroe, were good fellows, but Percy Newington—was Percy Newington. He waited until the last echo of the closing door had rumbled up the stairs and died away in the empty attic, then got impulsively out of his chair and pretended to examine my water-colours. The house felt uncomfortably still after the spirited talk and laughter of a few minutes ago, but I would not speak, because I knew that any but the absolutely right word would as likely as not send Newington away without unburdening himself. I lit a cigarette, sat down by the fire and took up the evening paper. I had purposely turned my back on Newington, but in spite of my honest attempt to read what was before my eyes I was acutely conscious that he was listening intently, that he wished to be unobserved, and that my ostentatious interest in the *Pall Mall Gazette* had not deceived him. My nerves are fairly healthy, but the situation was becoming intolerable when Newington exclaimed, "What was that?"

Taken off my guard, I turned sharply round. Newington stood in the middle of the room, his lean figure bent forward, his prominent eyes fixed on the door, his nervous hands crooked and half raised in the air. Even in that moment I noticed how perfectly his attitude suggested the hawklike stoop of his intellect. His eyes compelled mine to the door.

"Ah!—you heard it too;—there it is again!"

I listened. "It is only Mrs. Prosser going to bed—she is later than usual," I said, looking at him steadily and speaking with a deliberate drawl.

Newington dropped his hand and eyed me suspiciously. I could see that he was on the point of calling me a liar, and I smiled in anticipation, and to assure him that I was in a mood to suffer abuse without resentment. Perhaps I overdid my assumption of calmness, for Newington took it the wrong way.

"Oh, please don't treat me like a child, Marshall," he said, impatiently, yet with a pathetic note of appeal.

"I don't," I retorted; "children don't usually suffer from overwork."

Newington laughed harshly.

"Then you mean to suggest that I am a lunatic?" he asked, bending his brilliant eyes on mine.

I hesitated for a moment. I did not wish to quarrel with him, but, in his own interests, I intended to be firm.

"I noticed how perfectly his attitude suggested the hawklike stoop of his intellect."

"No, not yet," I said, "but you will be if you don't chuck work and go into the country."

To my surprise Newington heaved a deep sigh of relief. "Then you have felt it too?" he asked eagerly; "you know what is coming?"

I shook my head. "There is nothing coming for me, because I have reached an age to prefer comfort before fame or riches, and have learned to take life easily."

Newington smiled incredulously. "Do you mean to tell me, Marshall, that you are like the rest?" he said, "that you have had no warning of the awful thing that is threatening us?"

"Look here, Newington," I said, getting up and facing him, "suppose you leave off asking conundrums and tell me in plain words what is the matter with you."

"With me!" he cried; "good God, if it were only myself I should not care. I can escape; I am leaving London to-morrow—if I live, but you, the others, the millions who are too careless or too dull to realise their peril. . . . Come out of it, Marshall! don't be a fool. What is the use of remaining? You can't help these poor blind creatures—they wouldn't listen. Do you think that I would be such a coward as to run away if I thought that there was the slightest chance of opening their eyes? They are already doomed; it is like the fascination of the serpent before he strikes. But you—come out of it, Marshall, before it is

too late!" In his agitation he gripped me by the shoulder and shook me roughly.

"Upon my soul, Newington," I said irritably, "I don't know what you are driving at."

"Why, man, even the papers are full of it, for those who have eyes to read." He caught up the *Pall Mall Gazette*. "Look here," he pointed with a trembling finger; "'Unexplained fire in Bedford Square,' and here, 'Mysterious disappearance of a man in the City'; why, it's as plain as the writing on the wall, but they won't see it—they won't see it!" He stamped his foot, and his voice rose to a sobbing scream.

"Well, for the matter of that," I said stolidly, "there are dangers in the country as well as in London."

"It isn't *in* London," he said; then, stooping forward and speaking in a passionate whisper, so low that I saw rather than heard the words: "It's London, London itself—the streets, the houses, the great Beast we have created."

I began to feel seriously alarmed. "You'll forgive me, Newington," I said gravely; "but this really proves what I say about your being overworked. You are not the first man——"

"Oh, I know all about that," he interrupted; "it's referred to in the text-books, isn't it? as a form"—he laughed bitterly—"a form of insanity. That is the most awful thing of all: men's intellects are so poisoned by the influence that they dare not own the truth, but call it madness. . . . You remember the panic terror of the ancients—the sudden fear of something that came upon men in lonely places? That was dreadful; but Nature, if careless of her children, was not vicious. . . . When Adam and Eve heard the voice of God walking in the garden they were afraid, but there was something uplifting in their very fear; God is awful, but He is not malign. . . . The voice that we hear to-day is that of a cruel monster, infected with our own lusts and vices. . . . Listen!"

He strode to the window and flung it up. The curtains bowed inward, the solemn sweetness of the night air filled the room. "What do you hear, Marshall?"

"A sound like the sea, a continuous murmur, now rising, now falling, broken occasionally by the sudden cry of a newsboy, the whistle of a passing train."

"Yes, yes," he interrupted; "but can't you hear the sinister undertone, the muttering that is neither human nor of the elements? If every cab and omnibus stopped running, if all the passing feet were stilled, if the voice of the river were hushed, you would still hear that murmur."

He shuddered, and shut down the window with a bang.

"Don't you realise that London is alive? That whilst we poor fools have been puzzling and quarrelling over the origin of life, the precise point where the inanimate compound becomes organic and sentient, we ourselves have been helping to create life on a stupendous scale—an organism more powerful than all our armies, more pitiless than the Minotaur? Do you believe that when a house collapses, burying whole families in its fall, that when some hapless creature is mangled to death by the machinery he tends, it is an accident? . . . Let me make it plain to you, Marshall. It is accepted as a poetic platitude that London has a personality *apart* from her inhabitants: don't you see that when we speak about 'London's opinion' on this or that, we are on the edge of a bigger truth than we know?"

"I think I see how it is, Newington," I said: "your naturally sensitive mind, excited by overwork, has become possessed by the idea of incarnate evil in the shape of London. You are suffering from a sort of moral hyperæsthesia!"

"What is the use of telling me that?" he exclaimed. "You don't blame the individual cell for the general condition of an organ. You and I—all of us—are merely cells in the total organism of our race. Everything we will or do, think or feel, is but a summing up of the general tendencies of humanity modified by environment, and finally controlled by the ultimate purpose of the universe. Now we are unable to judge of that ultimate purpose, but we do know that the general tendencies of our nature are evil. Our folly lies in herding together until this aggregate wickedness is beyond our control; and in providing a body, as the man swept and garnished his house in readiness for the habitation of that great Oversoul of Evil. . . . For ourselves Christ died, because, though fallen, we were made in God's own image; but these bricks and stones are untouched—are incapable of

being touched by the general redemption of humanity. They are outside, monstrous; but none the less alive for all that."

"This is sheer fantasy, Newington," I murmured.

"Fantasy! Yet you accept the converse: you reverence a church—I don't mean the idea, but the very structure—with dynamite? Do you suppose that these men, notoriously tender-hearted, professedly lovers of their kind, were actuated by the mere lust of destruction? No; their so-called crimes were the mad struggles of men who felt the toils closing round them—clumsy and useless efforts to wound the Monster in a vital part. And that Law which condemned them

"'This monster, to whom we have given veins, arteries, bowels, and nerves, is waking up.'"

because it is saturated with holiness, steeped in divinity. You admit the idea of sacrilege, don't you? . . . and what is the Beast of the Revelation but a city?—and why did God destroy the cities of the Plain—not the inhabitants only, but the *cities*, the streets and houses? Have you ever considered the true inwardness of those motiveless crimes against society such as the blowing up of public buildings was but a blind creature of the Beast. . . . We talk about building cities as if their creation were a conscious act of ourselves If you come to think seriously of the matter, the building of a house is the spontaneous effort of an aggregate will to provide a habitation for the individual. A man does not construct a house in Hornsey of his own deliberate purpose, but because he is moved by the corporate

impulse of that organism we call London. London wishes to grow; she imposes it upon her inhabitants that they shall make her grow. Properly speaking, cities build themselves, as we make room in our bodies for the cells of our development. It is preposterous to conceive an individual cell going about saying, 'I will choose this man's body or that.'... And when in the process of evolution a certain aggregation of cells is arrived at you get life, and in the course of time consciousness, self-knowledge; and the organism says, 'I am.' It cannot have escaped your notice that a modern city is so highly organised that we think and speak of its inhabitants as unity. It is a commonplace that a man living in one of our great cities is no longer a free agent: he thinks and moves only as permitted by the general consciousness of the community. The wave of depression during the early days of the late war, the hysterical scenes following the relief of Mafeking and Ladysmith, the poignant gloom on the occasion of the King's illness, the solemn rejoicing over the Coronation—these things cannot be looked upon as the sum of individual emotions, but as floods of feeling shared willy-nilly by the man in the street. This you'll say is an accepted truism; but what is not yet realised is the hideous fact that these emotional phenomena do not emanate from London's inhabitants, but from the town itself. . . . Consider London, with its gigantic respiratory and vascular apparatus of gas and water pipes, its alimentary canals in the shape of underground railways and tubes, and, more significant still, its stupendous nervous system of telegraph and telephone wires and cables. It is already alive, and the experiments of Marconi point clearly to the imminent birth of consciousness, of energy thrown off and detached, become aware of itself. This Monster, to whom we have given veins, arteries, bowels, and nerves, is waking up. . . . It is a case of *induction*: just as the particles of wood in the body of a fiddle become educated into a harmonic relation, so that the instrument may justly be said to possess a soul, so the bricks and stones in our Metropolis have become educated by the continuous vibrations of life and electricity to which they are increasingly subjected. . . . I need not remind you that it is a scientific commonplace that nervous and electrical energy are mutually convertible, as illustrated by the torpedo."

"But," I objected, "consciousness implies not only stimulus, but an organism capable of reaction. Now, bricks and stones——"

He waved me aside.

"Life and consciousness do not depend upon peculiarity of substance, but upon molecular arrangement, eminently upon condition. We are of the same ultimate substance with the inanimate objects around us; we possess no distinctive element by virtue of which we are living beings. The dictum of the chemist that carbon is the essential to organic matter is only begging the question. The difference between organic and inorganic is one of *state*, depending primarily upon the character of the intermolecular vibrations. Intermolecular vibration is universal; these walls are equally in movement with ourselves. It is merely a difference of rhythm, sympathetically alterable, as demonstrated by the experiment in which grains of sand are disposed in symmetrical figures by the communicated vibrations of a violin string. It is only a matter of scale, by the way, to conceive our world and the innumerable planets as but molecules in some stupendous and single organism co-ordinated by that music of the spheres which the poets have sung. The disparity between interplanetary and intermolecular space depends only on our idea of space, which is as arbitrary as our conception of time."

Somewhat calmed by the abstract regions into which he had carried the discussion, Newington continued to walk up and down the room, his prominent eyes glaring into space, his nervous hands clasped behind his back.

"At least," I said, "you have given me something new to think about."

"New!" he exclaimed, wheeling round. "If it were new there would be a possibility that I am mistaken, that—as you more than half suspect—my mind is unbalanced. . . . On the contrary, from the earliest ages the mind of man has felt the truth of what I say. What are all the tales of haunted houses but half recognitions of this ghastly possibility? Nobody is afraid of a ghost, a feeble and preposterous figment of the imagination; what men fear is the house, the room so ineradicably stained with some crime that it has the power to work on our sub-

consciousness and create a spectre. This nameless fear is ever present behind more natural causes for alarm. When the man in Poe's tale woke up to find that the room which previously had five windows had now only four, behind the practical fear of being crushed was the subconscious dread that the room was closing in *of itself*. That was the horror! . . . What is the secret of our repulsion from the Chinese but our irrational though unconquerable feeling that they are *automata*? Why do we shrink from the larger crustaceans? Because they suggest animated machinery. The fear of a thing implies the recognition of its possibility. In every age men have thrown out vague hints of what they dared not speak except in a parable: there was the story of Pygmalion, the terrible history of Frankenstein. We too have warmed our idol into life, feeding it with blood and sweat and energy, until it is no longer our slave but our master."

"There is just one point, Newington," I said: "if, as you say, this fear is universal, why does nobody but yourself make the effort to escape?"

"Because, like rabbits in the den of the python, they are paralysed by what they fear. The millions are no longer capable of exerting their will; they think and do only as London bids them. They cannot get away; London will not let them go. If it were only possible to rouse them! You know very well, Marshall, that if I went out into the street and cried on the people to save themselves I should be apprehended as a lunatic, because the authorities themselves are unconscious agents of the Monster and dare not let the truth be known. But you, Marshall, you are a man of intelligence. Listen to me; come away from this cursed place while there is yet time."

"My dear Newington," I said, "I neither accept nor deny the truth of your words. For yourself, for many reasons I think that you are wise in your decision to leave town, but I have work which at present necessitates my staying here. In three weeks——"

"Wretched man!" he cried; "in three weeks it may be too late. Who knows," —his voice sank and he glanced fearfully round the room,—"who knows but that in speaking to you I have already hastened the end? There is a sinister truth in those words 'walls have ears.' Are your senses so gross that you have had no personal warning? Do you never hear noises that you cannot explain? do the shadows never move, nor the houses scowl at you as you pass? Have you never experienced that sudden waking in a sweating terror, the awful consciousness of Something in the room? . . . Think of London at this moment. Listen! Cannot you hear above the stertorous breathing of its human parasites the mighty systole and diastole of the city? Stone awakens and murmurs to stone; the Monster is plotting. Nor London only: when you consider the rapid development of other cities, the stealthy outgrowth of suburbs, you must realise that the country is covered with a chain of gangha linked together in a vast conspiracy by a network of telegraph and telephone wires. To-night they conspire; to-morrow they may act."

So Newington took his terror out into the night, and I never saw him again. Whether he was the victim of delusion, or whether we have indeed all succumbed and become the slaves of a Monster more pitiless than the Minotaur, is a problem which for me remains insoluble.

THE LOST ELIXIR.

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

A WEEK after I had passed my examination before the committee of the Narrative Club, which, as you may know, is an assembly into which none are admitted save those who have many wanderings to their account and are able to tell tales about them, I received a notice from the Secretary to the effect that he was in a position to accept my cheque in payment of my entrance fee, and, further, that he would be happy to introduce me to my fellow-wanderers at the usual monthly supper on the following Sunday, at 9 p m.

"You are rather in luck as regards your introduction to-night," he said, when we met at his rooms. "According to the strict rules you would have been called upon to justify your calling and election by telling us a story; but it so happens that this evening will be the only one for nearly a year that we can get hold of a man who is, perhaps, our most distinguished member. You know him by name, and you may have run across him in some of your travels—Professor Hessetine."

Of course the world-famed name was familiar to me, as it is to everybody who has read anything outside novels and newspapers, but as I had had the great privilege of sitting at the same table with him a couple of years before on a West Coast boat from Panama to Lima—whither he was going to write a monograph on the prehistoric tombs of the ancient seaboard towns—the freemasonry of travel entitled me to claim acquaintance with him.

"Then that's all right," said the Secretary, himself a noted climber of hills and slayer of retiring beasts which affect the most neck-breaking localities to be found above the snow line, when I had mentioned this. "he'll be delighted to see you again and have a chat about Incaland with you. Personally, I am expecting quite a treat, apart from any story he may have to tell us; for he promised me, in his letter accepting the invitation to be the narrator of the evening, that we should be the first to hear of what he has done at Susa. Even before the scientific papers get it, I mean."

"If he does that I don't much care whether he tells us a story or not," I said. "I can hardly imagine any ordinary travel yarn that would be anything like as interesting as Hessetine on Susa."

"That, my dear fellow," he replied, with a smile, "is probably because you have only just become a member of the Tale Club, as some of our irresponsible globe-trotters have christened it. Oh, and, by the way, that reminds me," he went on, turning towards me, "there's just one hint I ought to give you. You'll have to expect some pretty tough-laid yarns at our distinguished symposia, but we have a tacit understanding as to the acceptance of the aphorism that truth is often stranger than fiction, and so we often give truth—and the narrator—the benefit of the doubt."

"That's nothing," I laughed: "I know some myself, perfectly true, which no British jury would believe if I told them on oath in the witness-box."

Now this was a true saying, but——well, if any one else than a man of European reputation had told Professor Hessetine's story and staked that reputation on its truth I should still have had my doubts as to the complete purity of his facts.

It so happened that during supper—by the way, a supper at the Narrative Club is quite the most delightfully free-and-easy meal inside the confines of civilisation—the conversation, led off by a young doctor who had just been making a long study of the so-called miracle-healing practised by the priest-physicians of Corea, turned upon the many well-authenticated traditions which exist among nearly all peoples belonging to

"'He did not show the slightest sign of surprise at my appearance.'"

the older civilisations as to the possibility of prolonging human life, and even youth, indefinitely by the regular eating of certain combinations of herbs, or the direct mingling of certain animal and vegetable essences with the blood.

I noticed that, although the Professor listened most attentively to the conversation, he only assisted it by an odd remark, always very much to the point, thrown in here and there, and every now and then an approving nod or a dissenting head-shake. When the table was cleared, and the chairman, according to custom, gave up the post of honour to the Narrator of the evening, it was not very long before we discovered that he had a reason for his reticence, for the first words that he spoke after the glasses had been filled and the pipes loaded were:—

"Fellow-wanderers by sea and land"—that is the usual formula of address—"I daresay you will have noticed that I have been exceedingly interested in the conversation which took place during supper. It is, of course, a most absorbing topic for all students of human things who are able to approach the most impossible-seeming subjects with that perfectly open mind which, as most of us believe, only long study and extensive travel can give. But whether it be what is commonly called a coincidence or not, I may as well preface the story I am going to tell you by saying that it bears with exceeding closeness upon that very subject"

While the Narrator was saying this he seemed to some of us, certainly to myself, to have grown—I was almost saying—centuries younger. That, however, was not quite what I mean. He might himself have been of any age, clime, or nationality, and his features and expression had suddenly undergone a subtle change which seemed a reversion to some former state of being. In other words, he appeared to transfer his personality from the present into that remote epoch of which he was going to tell us, an epoch of which he certainly knows more than any man alive—that is, as far as we know, now alive.

"You must not think," he went on, perhaps having noticed a certain involuntary lifting of eyebrows round the table, "that I am going to tell you that since our last meeting I have had the privilege of making the acquaintance of the Flying Dutchman or the Wandering Jew, although I fear I shall have to make an almost equal demand upon your credulity—for, gentlemen, I am going to ask you not to disbelieve me when I tell you that I, who am speaking to you to-night with the lips of flesh, only a few weeks ago spoke, also in the flesh, with one who, as I have every reason to believe, lived and toiled, loved and thought in the long-buried city of Susa in the far-off days when Rameses the Great was king."

In any other assembly such a tremendous announcement, coming in all seriousness from the lips of such a man, would have been received with what the reporters are accustomed to describe parenthetically as "sensation"; but among the Wanderers by Sea and Land not an eye winked. Only a deeper silence fell upon us as we waited for the Professor to continue.

"I may presume," he went on after a little pause, "that you all know I have just returned after some months' work in connexion with the excavations at Susa, one of the buried cities of Upper Egypt, which appears to have been a sort of pleasure resort on the shores of a now vanished lake, to which the aristocracy of Thebes were accustomed to go as Londoners and Parisians now go to Homburg or Aix. Indeed, as a matter of fact, I am now quite certain that this was so, for I have in my possession an absolutely unique treasure in the shape of a complete plan of it, illustrated with drawings of its principal buildings, from the hand of one who saw it in all its pride and beauty.

"This is, however, a slight anticipation. I have the plan with me, and you shall see it afterwards. I was engaging my staff of skilled diggers and excavators—quite a different class from the common fellah labourers—at Memphis, as the best men are nearly always to be found there; and one day, when I had almost completed my staff and was thinking of making a start northward, I was taking my usual evening stroll among the ruins to the north of the modern city, when I was considerably startled by hearing a man's voice speaking in strangely musical tones and in a tongue totally unknown to me. It came from the other side of the fallen statue of Rameses, at the back of which I was leaning, smoking a contemplative pipe.

"'I read the scroll to her, and showed her the emerald.'"

"I say that I was startled, because I think I may affirm without boasting that I am familiar, not only with all the dialects spoken in the Nile Valley, but with most of the languages of the far and near East. Yet I searched my memory in vain for the recollection of a single syllable or inflection, until I heard him say quite distinctly, and yet with an accent and intonation utterly strange to me, the words, or rather the exclamation, 'O Rameses, Rameses!'

"No one could have pronounced the name with such exquisite purity and such profound depth of feeling—I had almost said sorrow. Gentlemen, I am not ashamed to admit that in that moment a keen thrill of awe passed through my soul, for the accents seemed to awaken some long-stilled echo of a memory belonging to a life that had been lived in other ages, and with it came the thought, I know not whence, that I was listening to a speech that human lips had not uttered for nearly thirty centuries.

"I put out my pipe and went round the base of the statue, and there I found myself face to face with such a man as I had never set eyes on before. He might have stood as model to the sculptor who designed the statue beside which we were standing. There was the broad, square, low forehead, and under it looked out at me the large, level-set eyes that might have belonged to the Great King himself. The straight, massive nose, the full, delicately-curved, sensuous lips, and the firm, commanding chin—I recognised them all, and the whole countenance wore that almost indescribable expression of contemptuous repose which is so inevitably characteristic of the royal race of Old Egypt.

"He did not show the slightest sign of surprise at my appearance. His eyes looked too weary with seeing for that. He returned my salute with a grave dignity that was, even there, in strange contrast to the scanty rags and the frayed and faded cotton shawl which hung from his shoulders. I addressed him in Arabic—for somehow the pure and ancient speech of the desert suggested itself as the most fitting medium at my command—and asked him if he would do me the favour of telling what language he had been speaking when I had unintentionally overheard him a few moments before. He replied, in Arabic which was far more fluent and idiomatic than my own:

"'That, Effendi, was the speech in which my brother Rameses, by whose time-worn effigy we stand, wooed our cousin Nephert-Anat, the star-eyed Lily of the Upper Nile, in the days when the desert that has buried our glories laughed and sang with the joy of its fruitfulness, and Egypt was Queen of the Earth.'

"Now, you are very well aware, gentlemen, that insanity, in its milder and more inoffensive forms, is not regarded in the East as it is here. It is treated with tolerance and by most people with respect as a sign of the special protection of the Deity. You will, I am sure, understand me when I say that my new acquaintance's first utterance inclined me to the belief that he was a scholar whom overstudy and under-feeding had made mad. But there was no sign of madness in the calm, luminous eyes which looked so steadily into mine while he was making this extraordinary speech. There was none of the restlessness of the feet and hands, or the sideway movements of the head, which are the almost certain accompaniments of insanity. On the contrary, his attitude was easy and yet full of dignity, and his manner was rather that of a man who is uttering a commonplace which has become wearisome to him.

"I, of course, realised at once that no good end could possibly be served by any show of incredulity, and so I replied just as seriously as he had spoken: 'Truly, then, O brother of the Great King, since thy days have been prolonged on earth so far beyond the common span of mortal life, great must be the blessing or grievous the curse that the High Gods have laid upon thee. Is it permitted that a stranger from a far-off land should ask thee why the shade of thy mighty brother hath waited so many cycles for thee in the Halls of Amenti?'

"'Ah,' he exclaimed, bending down towards me—for, as I have said, he was a man of splendid stature, fully a head taller than I am—and bringing his eyes to a level with mine, 'dost thou believe me, then? or is it only thy charity which thus listens with a show of credulity to what thou, like the others, takest for the idle tale of a madman? Speak truly, Effendi, as thy soul liveth, for on thy

Amaria! Amaria! he murmured again, falling on his knees beside the case

faith hangs the fate of one who, in the days that are forgotten, by his own rash and presumptuous act, brought upon his soul the anger of the High Gods, and cut himself off from the common lot of man.'

"I confess that I was strangely and deeply moved; and I replied, as though some inner impulse had been prompting me: 'O Egyptian, who am I, the child of yesterday, that I should say what is and is not possible to the might of the Gods? Shall the sand-grain by the sea-shore say to its fellow, "With thee and me the limits of Ocean end"? I would make no trespass on thy confidence, yet if thou hast the will to tell me, thy story will not fall on idle ears, and when the proof is given belief shall not be wanting.'

"'It is just,' he said, his lips making the faintest movement of a smile. 'Yet it is well said that trust is twofold. Will the Effendi trust me in a small matter if I will trust him in a great one?'

"It may seem to you like a piece of arrant foolishness in an old traveller, but I positively could not distrust the man, and so I answered: 'So far as it is lawful and fair dealing between man and man, Egyptian, I will trust thee to the half of my goods.'

"'I have no need of thy goods, Effendi,' he replied, with a sigh which was the saddest I have ever heard from a human breast: 'I who have feasted with kings and conquerors and scattered gold and jewels to the four winds of heaven till wealth became as dross in my hands and I had sickened of all that earth could sell—what is thy poor little fortune to me? Yet it is because I am what men call poor in money that I would ask for thy faith and thy help. The matter is in this wise. Thou art going to Susa, the city of my youth and my happiness, and the scene of the crime against the High Gods which made the one unfading and destroyed the other for ever. At Susa thou wilt seek to clear the dust of ages from the house in which I and mine dwelt, the temples in which we worshipped, and the tombs where the mummies of my dear ones are resting, while I, self-doomed, count on the countless suns of endless days. Now, what I ask is this: that thou shouldst make me one of thy company, the meanest of them if thou wilt, and take me to Susa, and there I will show thy workmen where to dig that they may find that which thou seekest. I will draw thee pictures of the temples and the theatres and the tombs, and mark out the streets and squares, until all Susa in its ruins shall be as plain to thee as it was in its glory to me.'

"I don't suppose that any archæologist had ever had such an astoundingly tempting offer made to him, and I candidly admit that I was not only tempted—I fell. But there was still the undeniable fact that, under all known human conditions, such a thing was absolutely impossible. Certain doubts, too, which I will come to shortly, had occurred to me while he was making his proposition. Still, all said and done, I stood to risk nothing but his railway fare and keep—I was already risking them and absurdly high wages too for men not half as likely-looking as my strange friend—even if I was only able to use that commanding air of his by making him an overseer, so I held out my hand, and said:

"'It is agreed, Egyptian. To-morrow we start by the train that leaves at sundown. Come to me after the early coffee, and I will tell the dragoman and the overseer that I have engaged thee. After the paper is signed I will advance money to buy what thou hast need of. Then in thine own time thou shalt make plain those things which are now dark to my eyes.'

"Our hands met. As I believe now, it was a grip which drew two living men together across a gulf of thirty centuries. That strikes you, no doubt, as a somewhat fantastic and far-fetched notion, but I am not without hope that your opinion will change when you have heard my reason for believing as I do."

The Professor, who had so far told his extraordinary story in the most commonplace conversational tone, paused and took a draught from a great tankard of lager before him. The silence was so strained that no one seemed to care to break it, even to get a drink. When he put his tankard down and faced us again, some of us began to find a sort of likeness in those symmetrically-cut features of his to others that we had seen on the wall-paintings at Luxor and Karnac and other familiar places on the now, if possible, vulgarised Nile, as well as on the mighty carved monoliths which even now raise their giant bulk above the sands of time,

changeless in the midst of change, silently contemptuous of the roar of the noisy centuries and the chatter of their yesterborn children.

"During the journey to Thebes," he went on, just as quietly as before, "my friend the Egyptian took his place among the other men in my employment, and scarcely exchanged a score of words with me. This was, of course, perfectly natural In the East master is master and servant is servant, and there are no board schools. But as soon as we had left the train at Thebes and began to prepare for crossing the fifty-odd miles of desert to the site of what once was the pleasure-city of Susa, a sudden change came over him. Those of you who have seen a man breathing his native air after years of exile will understand what I mean. He began to exert a sort of unofficial authority which not even the dragoman or the overseer tried to resist after the first few hours, during which they somehow learnt that he was at home and they were not.

"We reached the semicirele of granite bills under which the long-dead citizens of Susa once found protection from the worst of the desert winds, during the second march of the third day. We chose our camping-ground and pitchad our tents After supper I took my pipe and went for a stroll round the encampment, to see that everything was shipshape. There was such a moon in the sky as one only sees from the desert; and when my inspection was over I wandered towards the edge of the bay of smooth sand, broken by outcrops of stone which were for vanished Susa what the Monument and Nelson's Column may some day be for London—if they last as long.

"I had not gone far from the camp when I heard close by me the grave, gentle voice of my Egyptian saying, still in the classic Arabic of the Koran:

"'Effendi, thou hast kept thy part of that which was agreed between us. This is Susa, and my eyes already see the flood of ages rolled back, the sands swept away, and the likeness of the temples and palaces once more reflected in the blue mirror of the lake which washed their everlasting walls. Diana, as I have heard the old Greeks say, is smiling full-eyed on us to-night. Hast thou the leisure and the will to learn why Pent-ar, priest of the Royal Blood in tha House of Amen-ra and Writer of the Sacred Records, sought thy help and charity to return to the place of his birth?'

"I confess that I started a little at the mention of that name, so famous to all Egyptian scholars, by the lips of a living man who claimed it as his own, but I managed to tell him in my usual tone that if he was prepared to give me his confidence I was quite ready to receive it; and so I sat down on a huge slab of granite, and he, declining with a graceful gesture my request that he too would be seated, stood before me, a strangely eloquent figure in the bright moonlight, and told me his story with a simple dignity of diction and expression which, translating from his exquisite Arabic as I am, I cannot hope to emulate.

"'My history, Effendi,' he began, after a long look over the wilderness of ruins, 'shall be brief, since no man could tell even in many hours the narrative of the changing ages. And first I will explain what may have seemed strange to thee—that I, who, as I told thee at Memphis, have squandered uncounted treasures, should be too poor to pay my way here and do the work for myself which I am to do for thee. It comes about in this wise. Not many months ago I learned from such a seeker as thou art for the hidden glories of my people that a certain papyrus had been found at Thebes which was of the time of the Great King and a little after, and signed by one Panit-Ahmes, priest of Sechet and scribe of the College of Physicians at Thebes. Furthar, I was told that this papyrus, which is now in your great Museum of London, contained certain passages which, though plain to decipher, had no outward meaning, and contained, moreover, characters which the most learned of those skilled in the writing of the old Egyptians could not make words or phrases of.

"'Now in the days of the Great King this Panit-Ahmes shared with me the fame which in those days was greater than that which men could win with bow and spear, the fame of learning and of the knowledge of hidden things. This of itself, though it might have made us rivals for the favour of the High Gods, would not by necessity have made us enemies; but there was that between us which hath set man's hand against his brother since first the world began—the love of a fair woman

I divined instantly that the passages which your scholars could not read were written in the Hermetic character which was known only to the initiates of the Sacred Mysteries, and that, since this lore has been lost for many ages, there was no other on earth who could read them save myself.

"'That day I sold a few curious jewels, the last of a once great store, to the explorer, bought myself some clothes of the European fashion, and took passage to London. As I can speak your language, as I can all others which I have seen come into being since my nurse taught me the ancient tongue of Khem, I went to the chief keeper of manuscripts in your Museum and offered to translate this papyrus for him, though in doing so I was breaking the oath of my initiation, so strong upon me was the desire to learn what Panit-Ahmes had hidden in the Hermetic passages.

"'He looked on me at first in wonder, as thou didst, Effendi, when we stood that evening by the statue of Rameses; but there was unbelief as well as wonder in his eyes and his speech, so I went to a case in which some papyri of the time of the Second Amen-ho-tep, who took the great city of Nineveh, rested, and these I read off into English as quickly as you, Effendi, would translate from an Arabic writing. Then he believed, but his wonder grew greater; and in the end, after much talk and writing to many people, as is the fashion of the English, the permission I craved was given to me, and in a day I made the translation and a copy of the Hermetic passages for myself. The scholars of the Museum were greatly amazed, and offered me a high stipend to remain and work for them, but how could I, Pent-ar the Initiate, take money for the revealing of the Holy Mysteries to unbelievers? Also, I had deceived them, for the meaning I wrote down of the mystic sentences was not the true one. Had I written that, they would have laughed at me, and I should have broken my oath for nothing.

"'Now the meaning of the passages was this—and by it thou shalt learn, ere many days have passed, whether Pent-ar the Scribe hath told thee the truth or a lie:—

"'*O thou who in the days to come shalt be weary of the burden of years. Behold, my hate shall be buried in my tomb, that I may greet thee as friend in the Halls of the Assessors.*

"'*When the High Gods, whose holiness thine impiety hath outraged, shall judge thy cup of penance to be full, it may be that thine eyes shall see this writing, which thou alone of men wilt in those days be able to read with understanding.*

"'*Then shalt thou learn that the flame lit in thy veins by the Elixir of Long-Drawn Days may be quenched only by the dew which thou shalt find even then most on the waiting lips of Love. It was given to me to learn the secret of the poison which was the antidote to the venom of endless days. Thy mistaken love bound her soul in the flesh-fetters which through ages of weariness thou shalt learn to curse. My love gave her rest.*

"'*From her lips, in the good time of the High Gods, it may be given to thee to drink the Elixir of the Lesser Death. On the green shores of Amenti we wait and pray for thee.*

"'Effendi, thou hast already heard the story of Pent-ar, for beyond the recital of the Passages of Panit-Ahmes—once my rival and enemy, and now my friend and only hope—there is little to tell that thou hast not already guessed.

"'In many climes and ages I have seen men seeking the essence which they in their ignorance called the Elixir of Life. I could have given it to them, as I could give it to thee if I wished to repay thy friendship with a curse; for it was I who, guided by the malice of the Infernal Gods, discovered the reality of which they were seeking the shadow, and the manner of finding it was this:—

"'When the Great King was building the Hall of Seti at Luxor, many structures were cleared away to make room, and great excavations were necessary for its foundations. In one of these I, when, as Keeper of the Records, examining the ground that no hidden sacred place might be violated by the workmen, found a very ancient temple, so old that it was buried in those days even as Susa is buried in these. By virtue of my office I passed into it alone;—would that my feet had rotted to the ankles before I had crossed that fatal threshold! In the inmost sanctuary, in the place of hiding behind the chief altar, I found a golden casket of scrolls, which, as was my right, I took home with me, that I might if possible discover new secrets amongst their

contents. That which I sought I found, and more.

"'Fastened by a blood-red seal to the smallest of the scrolls was a great emerald wrapped in many folds of leaf of gold. The scroll, deciphered after much labour, told me that it was hollow, and that its cavity was filled with the Elixir of Long-Drawn Days. "O thou," ran the scroll, "whose learning shall teach thee the meaning of these words: know that the Elixir of the Emerald is the last of the secrets of the Infernal Gods vouchsafed to man. If thou hast courage, and wouldst outlive the changing ages, thyself unchanged amidst them; if thou wouldst see the generations of men pass away like shadows from the bright morning of thine eternal youth, mingle but a drop of this ichor—which is the tears of Isis—with thy blood, and never shall it be chilled with frosts of age, nor its flow arrested by the hand of Death. Dost thou love? Then shall one drop more in the veins of thy beloved give thee and her the delights of quenchless love and deathless passion as long as the ages last. Immortal—the Infernal Gods greet thee!"

"'Alas! Effendi, I loved, and through my love I was lost. . . . I would fain spare myself and thee, Son of the Younger Days, the story of that which was the same then as it is now, and as it shall be when the last son and daughter of man pledge their troth on the brink of the common grave. Let it therefore suffice to say that Amaris was in my eyes even fairer and more desirable than her sister the lovely Nefert-Anat herself, who was honoured by the love of the Great King. Endless days of fadeless youth with her—what more could the Gods themselves give me? I took the elixir in my satchel one evening when I was to walk with her through our favourite paradise among the palms. I read the scroll to her and showed her the emerald. Then I tempted her as I had been tempted, and because she loved me I won my way with her.

"'Soon afterwards we were married, for I was of the Royal Blood and Panit-Ahmes was not. Moreover Rameses and Nefert were my friends and pleaded my cause well. My rival cloaked his wrath and his hate under a guise of resignation, but the fires burnt still in his breast and well-nigh consumed him.

"'On our marriage-night I instilled the elixir into my veins and hers, and we went to rest dreaming that, as long as the sands of time should run, for us all nights would be like this, all mornings like the morrow. The next day, in the boasting pride of my happiness and triumph, I told Panit-Ahmes of what I had done, and then, telling him that I and my Amaris, alone of the sons and daughters of men, should live and love for ever, I flung the emerald and what was left in it of the tears of Isis far out among the brown waves of the Nile.

"'What hidden lore Panit-Ahmes may have known then or discovered later I know not, but he laughed when he saw me throw away what kings would have given their dominions for, and told me that since I had kept part of the curse of the Infernal Gods for myself I was welcome to do what I would with the rest. "As for Amaris thy wife," he said, as he turned away from me, "I have loved her, and I will save her from the doom that thou shalt some day pray the High Gods in vain to take away from thee."

"'For a year, Effendi, I was happy—happy, perchance, as no other wedded lover has been since then, for that year was to me only the first of the countless years which should all be as bright as it was. Then Panit came to me, and told me that he had found in a dream, which was a revelation from the High Gods, the secret of the antidote to the tears of Isis. I laughed him to scorn, so marvellously had the elixir renewed my already fading youth within the short space of a year. I boasted that I would drink a measure of it as I would a draught of the red wine of Cos, but he flung my laugh back at me, saying that since I loved the life of the flesh so well, I should live it. It was not for me, but for Amaris, that she might lay down the burden of living when the Gods pleased or she was weary of carrying it.

"'Then said I, in my pride, "O Panit-Ahmes, Amaris will be singing the songs of youth in the days when thy mummy is dust. Let her drink if she will. She is my most precious gift from the Gods, thou canst not take her from me."

"Never was vainglorious boast more bitterly requited, never was boaster made more humble than I was. Amaris, full of faith and vivid life as I was, took the hazard of the draught laughingly, and

seemingly was none the worse for it. Yet another year had not gone by before she sickened of a fever that followed a low Nile, and died. Mad with grief, I took the fever too, and for many days lay in delirium. When I returned to health and reason, the mummy of Amaris already lay in its place in the City of the Dead, over yonder behind the northern spur of the hills, and Pant-Ahmes too was dead, and had taken his secret with him over the River of Darkness into the Land of Shadows.

"'Effendi, my tale is told, nor will I weary thee further by telling thee the awful story of the years that have passed between then and now. I have seen the races of men come and go, and their empires wax and wane. I have seen altars rise and fall, faiths born and die, like shadows drifting over the eternal sea. I have learnt the vanity of human things—the shame of glory and the poverty of wealth and the dream of dominion—and here I stand before thee, poor and lonely, without a friend or a lover among all the myriads of men, weary of living, and asking only of the High Gods and thee to find the tomb of Amaris, that I may lay my lips on hers, and from them receive the sweet summons to join her waiting shade on the green shores of Amenti.'

"Such, gentlemen," continued the Professor, laying down a few slips of paper which he had used every now and then to help his memory, "such was the extraordinary story which I heard under such singular circumstances amidst the ruins of Susa. I will tell you the sequel to it in as few words as possible, for I must confess that my theme has somewhat run away with me. Marvellous as it may seem to you, I must ask you to accept it as I saw it and as I tell it to you. There are some things which do not admit of discussion or explanation, and I think you will agree with me that this is one of them.

"Pent-ar was as good as his word, so far as his knowledge of the locality went. The precision with which he indicated the course of the streets and the positions of the hidden buildings was little short of miraculous. For upwards of a month he possessed his world-weary soul in patience, until he had completed the plan of which I spoke some time ago. When he brought it to me, soon after sunrise one morning, he said, with that strange, joyless smile of his:

"'Effendi, have I kept faith with thee? Have I promised aught that I have not performed? If thou art content with me give me now my freedom, that I may go and seek the tomb of Amaris.'

"My answer was an order to my overseers to move the camp at once under his direction to the City of the Dead. Once there, his whole manner changed. His eyes burned with the fire of an eager anticipation, and he worked with pick and shovel harder than the best of the labourers. At the end of a week we had laid bare a small pyramid, the apex of which, only showing a couple of feet or so above the sand, he had found with unerring instinct or memory after an hour's survey of the wilderness of ruins amidst which it stood. Just before sunset on the last day he came to me with two lamps in one hand and a powerful crowbar in the other.

"'My friend,' he said, using the term for the first time, 'Pent-ar has come to bid thee farewell. The tomb is found, and Amaris waits for me within. I go to open the way to her. If thou wouldst see with thine own eyes the proof of the things which I have told thee, come with me now to the Gate of Death. But bring all thy courage with thee, for it may be thou wilt need it.'

"'I will come, Pent-ar,' I said. It did not seem a time for more words, so I took one of the lamps and followed him to the tomb in silence. It would have taken my workmen hours to remove the great stone slab which closed the entrance; but he, evidently knowing all the secrets of the lost art, laid the passage open in less than an hour. Still silent, we went in, he leading. After I had counted twenty paces the passage ended in a chamber about twelve feet square and fifteen high. In the middle of it, on a huge cube of polished black marble, lay two splendidly adorned sarcophagi. One was open and empty, the other closed.

"'The resting-place of him who died not,' Pent-ar whispered, holding his lamp over it. Then he gave the lamp to me, and set to work with a chisel and mallet, which he had picked up outside the pyramid, on the lid of the other sarcophagus. When he had loosened it I helped him to raise it. A mummy-case lay inside, and this with reverent hands

we lifted out and laid across the end of the stone. For a moment Pent-ar stood beside it, with hands raised above his head, and murmured in the ancient tongue what was doubtless a prayer for forgiveness and the favour of his outraged Gods. This finished, he took his knife from his belt and with a few deft silent movements detached and removed the cover of the case.

"'Amaris! Amaris!' he murmured again, falling on his knees beside the case, and saying some more words in his own speech.

I looked over his shoulders, and to my amazement I saw, not the mummy I had expected to find, but the unswathed, white-robed figure of an exquisitely beautiful girl, who, instead of having lain there hidden from the sight of men for thirty centuries, might have fallen asleep only an hour before.

"'It is time,' said Pent-ar, rising and taking my hands. 'Is she not beautiful, my love, my bride? See, are not her sweet lips moist still with the dew of love, as Pant said? Now farewell, Son of the Younger Days and last of my friends on earth. In a few moments Pent-ar will be walking in the groves of Amenti hand in hand with Amaris. Farewell, and let not thy courage fail thee in the presence of Death the Releaser.'

"As I pressed his hands and bade him farewell, a flood of memories swept over my soul, I know not whence. Was it possible that I, with other eyes, had once looked with love on that fair face? Who knows? But before I could frame the question I would have asked Pent-ar, he had stretched himself lengthways over the case and pressed his lips to those of his dead love.

"Gentlemen, I hope I may never see such another sight as that which I beheld in the next few moments. No sooner had their lips met than the fair flesh of the mummy grew dark and shrivelled into a thousand wrinkles. The eyes sank back into the sockets, the gloss faded from the gold-brown hair, and the rounded form shrank together under the garments. But even this was as nothing to the awful change which the magic of the Death-kiss had wrought on Pent-ar. He who a moment before had stood with me, a living breathing man, holding my hands and speaking to me in his now familiar voice, became, as it were in an instant, not a corpse, but a skeleton covered with a dry brown skin, through which the grey bones broke their way as they dropped with a gentle rustling sound into the case in which the ashes of the long-parted lovers at length were permitted to mingle.

"In my wonder and horror I dropped the lamps I was holding, and when I had groped my way into the outer air I found it full of flying grains of sand. I fought my way, half choked, back into camp. That night the worst sandstorm I have ever seen raged until morning, and when I was able to go back to the City of the Dead I found nothing but a wide, level plain of driven sand where our excavations had been made. It was the winding-sheet of Pent-ar and Amaris, and beneath it their ashes shall, I trust, rest in peace until the dawn of the day whose sun will never set."

IN THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE.

BY GERALD MAXWELL.

"HOW is he, Förster?" asked the tall, red whiskered Scotsman, in a low tone of anxiety, as he hurried up the steps of the observatory.

"Bad, Professor," whispered the doctor: "our friend could scarcely be worse."

"Is there no hope, then?"

"None whatever!"

"Do you think he'll recognise me to-day?" inquired the newcomer.

"He might," replied the other, turning to lead the way into the big one-storied building which stretched out on all sides from the great grey dome; "the fever is not quite so high this morning."

Andrew McNaughten, F.R.S., entered the darkened room with a heavy heart. Nor, when he had grown accustomed to the sudden change from the glare outside, was there much in the appearance of his Russian colleague to reassure him. And yet Maximoff was not unconscious, for, turning his head upon the pillow, he stared straight up at the professor. As he did so a peculiar expression of inquiry came into his deep-sunken eyes, as though the dying man wanted to ask some favour, and was douhtful whether it would be granted. Meanwhile his trembling hand feebly groped about for a page of manuscript that was lying on the bed.

Guessing that his friend desired him to read the closely covered paper, and that something of great importance must be written there, McNaughten took it up, and seating himself in a low chair, was soon buried in its contents. In his abstraction he hardly observed that the doctor had discreetly withdrawn, taking with him Paquita, a pale-faced young woman who had been on guard. And as he read on, the lines upon his broad forehead were drawn into a deep frown. At last, after what must have appeared to Maximoff an immeasurable period of time, but which was in reality only ten minutes, the professor glanced up from the pencilled note and met those eager half shut eyes that had been fixed upon him all the while. There was no need for him to speak: the Russian, who had gradually raised himself up on one hand, reached towards him with the other, and seemed to look into the innermost workings of his mind. Yet he dared not make himself a party to the proposal which that single sheet of paper contained. Unwilling, however, to distress his friend by any open sign of disapproval, he took that fragile outstretched hand in his own massive grip. They held their hands thus clasped for a long time in silence, and only when the dying man had sunk slowly back, exhausted by this great effort, did McNaughten call to his companion, who was carrying on a whispered conversation with the nurse in the corridor.

"You know something of this?" he inquired abruptly of the doctor.

"Yes," answered Forster, glancing at the paper which the professor held out towards him, "I think I know what it will be about! Come outside," he added, having satisfied himself that his patient had fallen into a state bordering on sleep, "and we can talk the thing over."

When they had settled themselves in a shady corner of the verandah, the doctor took out his cigar case and offered it to McNaughten, who waved it unceremoniously away. Quite undisturbed by this refusal, he proceeded to light a cigar, and, after placidly puffing at it for a few seconds, uttered an interrogatory "Well?"

"Well, of all the extravagant ideas I ever heard of," rapped out the professor sharply, "this is the maddest. And you mean to tell me that you have agreed to fall in with it?"

"I have not said so yet," replied the always precise German, "but why

shouldn't I, if Maximoff wishes it? Is it not, after all, natural that he should? Would not you like to do the same if you were in his place?"

"No, certainly not!" interrupted the professor, somewhat indignantly: "it could *prove* nothing"

"Nothing directly, of course; but *something* perhaps, nevertheless," said the doctor, drawing hard at his cigar so as to collect a quantity of dense smoke, which he immediately released in a succession of thick rings that floated upwards through the still air.

"A *negative*, supposing you were successful," rejoined McNaughten, with a snap of his bony fingers and a gesture of irritation, as though he wished to hear nothing further on the subject. Then, suddenly remembering that he was a guest on the island, he changed to a more conciliatory manner. "Look here, Forster," said he, "are you prepared to shorten your friend's life?"

"No," replied the other; "that would be what in Europe we call *murder*. But if you watch those rings of smoke for a little while you can calculate pretty well how long any one of them will last before it breaks up. Now I have watched hundreds of cases exactly like that of Cyril Maximoff's, and I can say with certainty that the individual we know by that name must have ceased to exist by this time to-morrow. The natural process of dissolution which people call death will begin during the small hours of the morning."

"What of that? We have no right to hasten it by one moment."

"We do not intend to!"

"Then how do you propose to carry out the experiment described in those notes?"

"I will not trouble you with the details, Professor, until you have acceded to our colleague's last request. It is enough that the thing can be done without precipitating the end by so much as a second. We have gone into that thoroughly," said the doctor, with obvious conviction.

"So you settled this business together," put in McNaughten: "the arrangement was *mutual*?"

"To be sure!" Förster made this answer as if it were a matter of course; adding, when he had emitted another prodigious cloud, "What would you have?"

"How did it come about?" asked the professor, in a tone far more sympathetic than that which he had hitherto adopted.

"It was in this way," began the German: "when Cyril Maximoff of the Academy of Medicine at Petersburg and I accepted the invitation of Señor Gonzales to visit this place in order to ascertain the causes of infection, we thought it extremely probable that one or both of us would succumb to the fever. We determined, therefore, to make the utmost of our opportunities while we lived, and, whatever happened, to pursue our investigations up to the last possible point. We two had many long talks in the laboratory, after our day's work was over, about the origin of things, and often our distinguished host would come down from his watch up there by the big reflector to join in these discussions. Well, Maximoff always went beyond us in matters of speculation, and some of his conclusions were as brilliant as the steps by which he arrived at them were daring. Gonzales used to say that it was beautiful to listen to him—that it made one feel as if one were thinking in the fourth dimension. I don't quite know what that is like; but I do know that I sometimes felt out of my depth with our Russian friend. They are strange fellows, these Russians: the stuff from which martyrs are made nowadays."

"Yes," said McNaughten, gravely bowing his head, "Cyril Maximoff is one of the martyrs of science."

"He is indeed," replied the doctor, "and more so even than you are aware. There is no length to which that man would not go in the search after truth. It was his insatiable craving to define the limits of the known that led him to conceive the plan he has just communicated to you. We were both of opinion that after death, so far as our individuality is concerned, there remains nothing. But how to demonstrate the existence of that nothing? There is the difficulty! And it occurred to him that the moment of death was the proper time to make the attempt. What if a man could be isolated from all contact with the outside world before that moment came, and kept so until it had long been passed? If we could not then either separate the matter of the soul from that of the body, or detect its departure in some recognisable form of energy, wouldn't we have travelled

a great way towards establishing the fact that it did not exist? Once he had hit upon this idea, he never rested till he had constructed an apparatus by means of which the experiment might be made. He employed the Don and me, as a pair of laboratory hands, to set up the powerful yet sensitive machinery he required for the exact working of his scheme; and I fancy, when you have examined it, you'll admit that it has no palpable flaw."

"Possibly!" agreed the professor, who had already grown interested; "but if what we call the soul is immaterial, as most people suppose it to be——?"

"We shall not find it in the *material* remains," rejoined Herr Forster, imperturbable as ever; "and if we discover no manifestation of force when it departs, we may say that it neither is in, nor has left, the body; therefore that it is *nothing* except a name."

"I see what you are driving at: you believe that the universe contains only force and matter?"

"Which are, perhaps, different terms for the same thing. That is, roughly speaking, our view."

"Yes," replied McNaughten thoughtfully; "for all that, there might be something else, or both may possess forms that are beyond our ken."

"Quite so," said the doctor, with a smile; "we must take the chance of that; but if you'll help us to keep watch, we are not afraid that any form of matter or force will pass away unrecognised."

"You still expect me to assist in this test?"

"I *hope* you will."

"After I've told you that I regard it as altogether inconclusive?"

"Even so!"

"To what end?"

"To gratify the wish of a dying man; call it a whim, if you please."

The professor stared hard at the ground for several seconds in deep self-communion, and then, looking up with a set expression, said: "I'd do anything I could with pleasure, Forster; but really I can't let you draw me into this. It is a purely personal affair between you and poor Maximoff. I have nothing whatever to do with it."

"Pardon me," protested the doctor, speaking in a slow, impressive way, "but you have a *great deal* to do with it."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed McNaughten, amazed.

"Our friend's illness is not accidental."

"Do you suggest that he gave himself the fever intentionally?"

"He ran the risk of taking it intentionally."

"For what purpose?" inquired the professor.

"In order," explained Forster, "to see whether a certain kind of gnat we have caught on the swamps round here carried the infection. We could not quite agree on this point. I, from the large proportion of cases which occurred in the low-lying parts of the island, was forced to conclude that these insects must help to spread the disease. But Maximoff, not having found any active trace of infection in the numerous specimens he had dissected, held a contrary opinion. This proved nothing either way, and the only manner in which the truth could be arrived at was for some one, who had not previously had the fever, to be bitten by gnats taken from the suspected district. If he suffered nothing more than a local annoyance Maximoff was right; if he developed the disease my view was confirmed. We were, of course, both willing to make this trial, but, unfortunately, I had already taken the fever in a mild form, so might be considered immune; and Maximoff's attachment to Donna Innez, the daughter of our host, caused him to hesitate, for the moment, about taking such a step."

"What made him do it, then?" asked McNaughten impatiently.

"Your visit!" replied the doctor.

"How, in the name of all that's reasonable?"

Forster, after a final pull at the stump of his cigar, threw it away, and resumed his discourse with the same quiet deliberation as before.

"When our friend heard that you were coming here to observe the eclipse he seems to have seized on the opportunity, as one which might never recur, to carry out his great scheme. Therefore, without my knowledge or consent, he allowed some of the recently captured gnats to feed upon his arm. You know what followed! Nothing I have been able to do has arrested the progress of the disease. Why I have failed I cannot tell; because it had got a strong hold on him before he discovered that his

experiment had been only too successful, or because he made no serious effort to recover. I am morally certain he was convinced that my theory would prove correct, and that he intended all along to give his life in order to settle that *other* point while you were on the spot to witness those investigations he had planned with so much care. Your renown as an original observer of physical phenomena had naturally reached Maximoff, and he fully appreciated the weight your testimony would give to any statement which we might have to communicate to the world. If you refuse to join us, his last hours will be troubled by the thought that his sacrifice has been useless. To be sure, his wishes will be faithfully carried out by Don Gonzales and myself, whether you are present or not. Yet a failure on our part to record exactly what takes place must result in an incalculable loss to science. If you agree, you will not only set our friend's mind at rest, but you may be the means of adding a new chapter to the book of knowledge."

As he made this direct appeal his manner had grown gradually more intense, and he had spoken the last words with an outburst of fervour. But he was unable to gather at once what their effect had been upon McNaughten, for the professor had placed his hands before his face, and for some time made no answer. After a long pause, which was painful to both alike, the Scotsman rose abruptly, and, extending his arms, together with a slight raising of the shoulders, exclaimed: "Very well, I *consent*; though I can't pretend to approve!"

While the professor and Herr Förster were thus engaged outside, a still more impassioned appeal was being made within. They had not long left the room when Paquita, who had returned to her duty, heard a faint tap at the door, and on opening it discovered Señor Gonzales and his daughter waiting to see if they might be admitted. Perceiving that the sick man had turned his eyes in her direction, Donna Innez moved swiftly towards him, and falling on her knees at the bedside, cried in a soft voice, "Cyril, Cyril!"

Maximoff, who had instinctively taken her hand in his, looked at her with a sad smile, and, moving his lips with evident difficulty, breathed out in a scarcely audible whisper the one word, "Corazon."

She had indeed been his heart's idol ever since he realised her wonderful charm, which overshadowed even the fascination of her Southern beauty. And yet he was leaving her, deserting the woman who loved him, and whom he loved beyond everything in the universe—except one thing, knowledge; in order to follow what might be, after all, only a phantom! Some reflection of this feeling must have appeared in his wasted features, for as she gazed at him Donna Innez suddenly burst into a torrent of bitter tears. Then, as she bent downwards to hide the violence of her grief, he placed his transparent hand gently upon her head, saying in a low, plaintive tone, "Forgive me!"

Still, it was not the look of remorse she had seen in his face, but could not understand, which had caused her to break down: it was that other look she had seen there, and understood all too well, that look which even little children can read—the stamp of fast-approaching death. When at length she had got the better of her emotion, Donna Innez began to speak rapidly, as though there was much to be said and little time in which to say it.

"You must not ask forgiveness of me, Cyril, but I of you. The Madonna would not be deaf to my prayers if I had been less forgetful of her in my great happiness, and I should not have lost you; you would not be taken from me now, as a punishment because I have sinned in loving you too much. Yet you have your peace to make with Him Who orders all things for our eternal welfare. Promise me that before the end comes you will receive the last consolations of the Church. Father Manuel, who was to have joined our lives at the altar, is ready to administer them, although you are only of the Greek faith."

Maximoff shifted restlessly on the bed, and for a moment almost averted his face from her. But she paid no heed to this involuntary movement, continuing to plead with the same devout exaltation.

"Give me a sign that you will do this; for my sake, Cyril, so that I may know we shall meet again some day, when we have both done penance for our sins."

A strange light shone in the eyes of the dying man as he turned them, with an expression of infinite tenderness, towards

the woman who knelt beside him. What fault would she ever commit in the sight of the All wise? And then it was such a little matter she asked only that he should remain passive while a ceremony was performed which, to him, meant nothing. This thought passed through his mind far more quickly than the written words can convey it; so that, without an instant's apparent hesitation, he raised his right hand and touched a golden cross that was hanging from her neck, at the same time inclining his head ever so slightly forward. Donna Innez, perceiving this to be the sign she had begged him to give her, untied the ribbon which held it, and placed the cross upon his breast. Then, after pressing her lips to his shrunken hand, with an air of devotion as though she were taking a vow upon some sanctified relic, she allowed her father to lead her away in a semi-conscious condition.

In the evening, when the doctor rode back under a leaden sky from the long round of visits which he had got through as best he could—for it had been hard enough to bring comfort to strangers, with the knowledge that he could do nothing for his friend—he found that Maximoff had sunk into a lethargy from which, in all probability, there would be no awakening. As he had feared, the end was within sight, and already the companion of his labours was beyond the reach of any message from the outer world. But this did not prevent the good Father Manuel from coming, with all due solemnity, to bring the dying man that message of forgiveness without which the faithful may not pass into that peace which has no end.

Before an acolyte, who bore the consecrated oils, the holy water, and the censer, followed by the priest in full vestments, holding a silver monstrance, Forster reverently retired.

"So the senora has willed it," he thought, "and after all, why not? However repugnant these rites would have been to Maximoff in his normal frame of mind, might they not meet a desire for some such pious consolation latent in his sentimental Russian nature—that is, if he knew they were taking place? But he could hardly know that now."

Turning sadly away, with a slow step and bowed head, the doctor walked down the corridor into a great hall where the two biologists had pursued their common work of research. It was lighted from above by means of a lofty glass roof, the walls being entirely covered with rows of shelves, along which were ranged numberless glass vessels of every imaginable shape; and many different microscopic instruments, together with racks which contained a multitude of various-sized bottles, were set at irregular intervals upon two long benches. But Förster's eyes did not dwell either on his cherished preparations or the elaborate plant laid out for their examination; they travelled onwards to the figure of McNaughten, who was standing at the farther end of the room, intent upon the details of an enormous balance. This machine, which occupied a considerable space, was surrounded by a large plate-glass cover. And the professor, after most minutely inspecting its marvellously accurate construction, had been obliged to allow that it seemed well adapted to the conduct of the experiment in which he was rapidly becoming absorbed.

"You see," Förster said, approaching and indicating the solid central pillar, "it rests upon the firmest possible foundation; the floor of this room has no contact with it whatever. When that cover is lowered into the mercury bath below, nothing can cause the smallest disturbance from without."

"But can nothing escape from within?" asked the professor quickly.

"Nothing should escape our notice," replied the doctor, with an air of perfect assurance. "I think we have completely provided for the indication of any change which may arise, whether of matter or force. But please satisfy yourself of this," and he thereupon proceeded, in the leisurely manner of the trained observer, who takes nothing for granted, to explain the functions of a series of complicated instruments, as though he were pointing out their purpose to a mere student of physics instead of to the highest scientific intelligence in the world. Meanwhile McNaughten, silently nodding his assent from time to time, made rapid calculations as to the particular scope of each instrument, and a careful mental survey of the field they would cover when acting together. Nor did it appear that he could find a loophole in the conditions; for when Forster's explanations were at an end he advanced no objection to the

doctor's claim that the test ought to prove efficient.

It was dark when they left the laboratory and went out into the grounds for a breath of fresh air. On returning by the main entrance they met Father Manuel, who bade them good evening as they made way for him and uncovered out of respect for his sacred office.

Feeling that politeness required him to make some remark, the doctor said, "I fear our friend there was unable to derive much benefit from your ministrations, father."

"Not so, my son!" answered the priest, smiling with sublime confidence "the Church can give absolution to her children even at the eleventh hour; and rest assured, your friend's spirit will find its way, unfettered, to the throne of grace." Then, with a courteous bend of the head, he passed on with his acolyte.

For a few moments McNaughten looked steadily at the doctor, without speaking, while Förster gazed up at the dark clouds, which had massed themselves together so as partly to obscure the rising moon. "What is the truth?" he wondered. "Can this man be right in his simple faith? One might as easily believe that the victor and the vanquished will ride to Valhalla on those black horses when the battle of life is over."

"We shall have a storm before long," said the professor, with an accent of unconcern that was little in harmony with his state of mind.

"Yes," replied the doctor, assuming the same matter-of-fact tone "I hope Father Manuel will get home first!" And without another word they both mounted the steps that led up to the great shadow-filled observatory

Midnight had struck in the cupola over the servants' quarters, to which Paquita had long since retired; but never were three men more awake than those three who kept their last watch by the side of Cyril Maximoff. After repeated trials of the arrangement for generating a proper supply of oxygen and absorbing carbonic acid, McNaughten had permitted the glass cover round the balance to be lowered into the tank of mercury, over the surface of which a viscous fluid had been spread in order that fumes might not ascend from it into the air above. For on a narrow pallet, held in exact equipoise upon one of the scales, there rested the still breathing but otherwise motionless form of the Russian physiologist, isolated within a space of a few yards from all the outside universe. A powerful arc-light darted its focussed rays through the glass upon those drawn and discoloured features, which had already an aspect of unearthly calm. This single lamp served also to illuminate the clock-work drums that revolved against tracing needles, the filaments of wehlike wire, the diaphanous membranes and wide-mouthed receivers of all those instruments which had been attached at various angles to the central support. It had been settled that Gonzales should keep note of the movements of several of these, while Forster specially devoted himself to the delicate apparatus which was directed so as to record the pressure of each breath that left Maximoff's pallid lips, and McNaughten had undertaken the far more difficult task of endeavouring to detect the passage of some imponderable substance through the mercury at the supreme moment.

In order to perform this seemingly impossible feat, he was concentrating his undivided attention, by means of an adjustment of high-power lenses, upon a system of floating glass bulbs that he had himself constructed with the utmost care—a process which vaguely reminded him how, as an undergraduate, he had determined the weight of the moon by measuring the tidal force it exerted upon a barrel of water. That had been a neat piece of work, but this night's observation went as much beyond it as the problem to be solved transcended all those he had ever before investigated.

The long hours passed in a silence unbroken by any sound save the occasional hiss of the arc lamp, the continuous beating of the ram overhead, and from time to time a muffled peal of distant thunder. But towards daybreak the storm drew nearer, and once or twice a vivid flash of lightning was seen through the glass roof, rapidly followed by a loud and prolonged roar like the report of heavy guns.

At length Förster could tell from the scarcely perceptible motion of his indicators that his friend must shortly cease to breathe. And, in spite of the indifference with which long practice of his profession had taught him to look on death, he felt all the bitterness of their

parting. For one brief moment his eyes grew moist, so that the images they received were blurred; but he had soon conquered this weakness, and was again intently watching the tranquil figure of his dying comrade, whose dark eyelids were closed as though in sleep, and whose hands, folded upon his chest, seemed to clasp some precious object which they hid from view.

Suddenly the whole roof was lit up from outside with an effulgence which made the light within only a visible darkness. There followed immediately a crash of breaking glass, and the watchers saw what appeared to be a great globe of liquid fire, which, rushing downwards through the room, almost instantaneously vanished into the earth.

Every echo of the deafening thunder that accompanied this tremendous discharge had rumbled away when the half-stunned men regained their senses. They then perceived that the electric-light had been actually extinguished. But the master-passion soon reasserting itself, they at once set to work to find out what influence this ill-timed accident had exerted on their apparatus. And as the grey light of dawn poured in upon them, the three discovered that what had happened was utterly different from anything which they could have expected.

None of their numerous instruments had been damaged in the slightest degree; to all appearance, no part of them had even been disturbed. Only one movement had taken place—Maximoff was now lying with his arms by his side, and his eyes wide open, *dead*.

SAY, BUT A KISS.

I.

SAY, but a kiss;
Yet the great captains sailed
The world around, and spake as kings with kings,
And warred and won, and so returning hailed
The answering shore; then, while their welcomings
Roared from the quays, and the church-clangour pealed,
Saw but one face, and knew their fortune sealed,
Love, with a kiss.

II.

Say, but a kiss;
Yet the great sun that goes
About us triumphing
Moves but for this.
Yea, he, for this one thing
Looks out across the world, rises and sets,
Till the pale north her icy zone forgets,
Thrills to the throb of the sea, to the glad clamour of birds,
And the brown dust, long dead
In lands untenanted,
Sways in a golden cloud above the tumultuous herds.
So he, from east to west,
Calls from the furrow sudden spears of green;
Earth, as he goes, stirs in a sweet unrest,
Dreaming on that which shall be and has been—
Love, but a kiss.

G. A. J. C.

"'Yes, that was all the King's obstinacy,' replied the Queen."

From a drawing by S. H. Sime

BLUE ROSES

A FAIRY-TALE FOR IMPOSSIBLE WOMEN

BY NETTA SYRETT.

THE Princess Amelotte was the most exasperating princess in the world. The Queen said so frequently, and, as she remarked, "if a mother doesn't know her own daughter, who should?"

"She is not a bit like other princesses," she complained. And indeed she was not. Other princesses waited till they were addressed by tolerant and condescending princes. Amelotte, to their utter confusion and bewilderment, often spoke first. It was even rumoured that she was clever; but that was scarcely fair, since even if it had been true, the Princess had wit enough to disguise it.

Still, she was reckless, there was no doubt of that.

Other princesses, for instance, had no sense of humour, or if they had, on being warned that it was an unbecoming possession, they lost no time in suppressing it. Amelotte, on the contrary, laughed at many things, and as every wise queen knows, there is nothing a prince dislikes so much in a princess as a sense of humour. For it is a well-known fact among princes that princesses *have* no sense of humour. "Therefore to confront them with the impossible," as the Queen justly remarked, "is silly, and only makes them angry." But Amelotte either would or could not take advice, and so it happened that the Queen had the constant mortification of seeing more discreet but quite inferior princesses united to eligible and modest princes, who, after all, only wanted "some one to look up to them."

It was hard on the Queen, for she had spared no pains to render the Princess acceptable, even to the humblest prince. Potent fairies had dowered her with beauty, while fairies still more powerful were kept constantly employed in checking her intellect. Eloquent professors instructed her in the Art of Pleasing; and though, when she chose, no one could flatter a prince better than Amelotte, it sometimes happened that after she had spent a whole afternoon in assuring one of them how wise he was, and how good, he would go away with a puzzled expression and decide upon plain little Princess Yolande, or Violetta, after all.

So, as the Queen often said, "there was something wrong somewhere, and unless Amelotte's behaviour became more princess like, princes would continue to view her with disapproval, and it was even possible——" but here the august lady generally turned pale, and never finished the sentence.

"If your Majesty had only taken my advice about the christening," sighed Amelotte's old nurse

"Yes, that was all the King's obstinacy," replied the Queen.

And in truth the Princess's christening had been a strange affair. The King, who was then young and romantic, had insisted that it should take place out of doors, in the midst of a wood; for he wanted the baby Princess to have the flower fairies as godmothers, and, as every one knows, the flower fairies can never be persuaded to enter a human dwelling. But it was dangerous, the nurse said—very dangerous

"Why is it dangerous to be christened out of doors?" the Princess often asked

"Because sometimes the spirits of wild woodland things enter the baby's heart, and then it never rests," the nurse always replied, and more than this she either would or could not say.

But at last the Queen rejoiced, for the Prince of a neighbouring kingdom cast a favourable eye upon Amelotte, whom he had met at a State ball, and the next day he rode to the palace a suitor for her hand.

"With all my heart!" exclaimed the King, a little too hurriedly, as the Queen's glance informed him.

"The happiness of our daughter is all the world to us," she said "It is terrible to lose her," and she wiped her eyes with her royal handkerchief. The King began to look anxious, but cheered up when she added, "But, Prince, to whom could we entrust her future so confidently as to you?"

Prince Fortunas bowed, murmured a suitable reply, and the Queen hurried away to have a little private talk with Amelotte. The result was satisfactory. The Prince had danced well, he was handsome, his manners were good. Amelotte, tired of reproaches, consented to receive him, and in a few days the whole Court went mad with joy and excitement over the betrothal of Princess Amelotte and Prince Fortunas.

The night before the Princess's next birthday, a great ball was given at the palace. The crystal chandeliers sparkled with lights, the marble floors gleamed. Perfumed fountains played in the courtyards; the scent of flowers filled the air, and the most ravishing music floated out into the still darkness of the night.

Anything prettier than the little Princess, in her white dress, and her little white cap edged with seed pearls, it would be impossible to conceive, and the Prince regarded her with approval, and almost forgot that her expression was rather too startling for a princess.

Amelotte regarded *him* dubiously. It was intensely foolish of her, but she did not feel quite happy. No one would have guessed this, however, for her laugh was gay, and all the princes with whom she danced found her very amusing.

Prince Fortunas noticed this fact before long, and giving the Princess his hand, he led her from the ballroom, to offer a few words of advice and admonition. He was fond of both, and Amelotte was becoming just a little restive.

"You seem to find Prince Charming an interesting companion, Princess," he began.

"I find him almost worthy of his name, which is far better," she returned.

"May I suggest that your remark is scarcely worthy of a princess?" he somewhat haughtily replied

"Certainly you may," said Amelotte, cheerfully, "though I cannot agree with you. If *you* said Princess Violetta was charming, I might deplore your taste, but I shouldn't say it was a remark unworthy of a prince."

"That would be quite a different matter."

"Of course it would," returned the Princess calmly, "because Violetta, though a good girl——"

"You do not gather my meaning," interrupted the Prince.

Amelotte laughed mischievously, and seated herself on the marble edge of a fountain they were passing.

"There are certain things not unbecoming in princes, which in princesses are disgraceful," her lover continued, standing in front of her.

"How do you know?" inquired the Princess, with breathless interest.

"A prince always knows about such things," he assured her.

"Prince Fortunas led her from the ballroom"

From a drawing by S. H. Sime

"Why? I have known some quite silly princes."

"A prince is a prince for all that," returned Fortunas, who, if he had not lived in fairy times, would have been a Scotchman.

Amelotte looked up at him, and smiled bewitchingly.

"My Prince," she said, "it *is* nice of you to be jealous. If you go on in this way I shall certainly fall in love with you."

"But I'm *not* jealous!" the Prince hastened to assure her. "Jealousy is an unworthy passion. I am merely looking at the matter in the abstract——"

"That's what is wrong with you," murmured Amelotte, as though pleased at the discovery. "You look at everything in the abstract."

"I do not like your mood, Princess," declared the Prince.

"I'm sorry, but I can change it in a moment, if you wish," returned the Princess obligingly. "I have an enormous number of them."

"So I am aware A princess of many moods——"

"Must be very annoying to a prince with none," agreed Amelotte sympathetically.

"I think I may say you will always find me the same," said the Prince, with proud humility.

"Oh no, no! You mustn't take such a gloomy view," begged Amelotte.

At that moment there was a flourish of trumpets, and the King and Queen, attended by their retinue, swept past on their way to the banqueting-room. The Queen kissed her hand to the young couple, and sighed sentimentally. "Love's young dream!" she murmured.

"What was that you said, my dear?" inquired the King, who was getting a little deaf. It was owing to this circumstance, perhaps, that he could scarcely believe his ears when, after the banquet, he sat listening to a few pointed words from Prince Fortunas, who had requesred a private audience.

"It's no use," wailed the Queen. "She must have been bewitched at the christening."

"It was the best christening," muttered the King feebly.

"Yes, but some sprites must have got in as well," returned the Queen. "I *told* you not to have it in the open air."

In the meantime, Amelotte was sitting in her bedroom, whither after the ball she had instantly retired. She sat quite still, and did not know whether to be glad or sorry at her freedom.

"On the whole I'm glad," she reflected, finally. "It would have been *too* dull. And yet to settle down, and be a queen, would save a lot of trouble. Why can't I? Why don't I? Perhaps Nanna is right, and it's something to do with the christening after all."

Springing up impatiently, she walked restlessly up and down till, finding even her beautiful big room too small, she opened the door softly, and began to wander about the palace. The dawn was breaking, and anything more cheerless than the great empty marble rooms, with their big windows and their dying flowers, it would be impossible to imagine. The Princess felt very miserable.

"Oh! I hate it all, and I hate myself," she cried, looking round her. "What do I want? The stars out of the sky?—the sun out of heaven?"

And she thought suddenly of the old nurse's words: "*Sometimes the spirits of wild woodland things enter the baby's heart, and then it never rests.*"

"Is that why, I wonder?" she thought. "Is that why ordinary things, however charming, won't do for me? Is that why I want blue roses?"

The memory of roses of any sort gave her a sudden longing to get out into the air, and, gathering up her gleaming dress over one arm, she ran through the dim, mournful rooms, of which she had begun to be afraid, and never stopped till she found herself in the garden.

The palace garden was beautiful as a dream. Its lawns were soft as velvet, its great trees, arching over winding paths, gave pleasant shade at noon, its flowers glowed like fairy jewels; and through its midst flowed a river, murmuring as it slid between grassy banks on its way to the sea.

The garden was beautiful at noonday, when the splendid sun drew from its flowers a cloud of perfume. It was beautiful at sunset, when long shadows lay across the grass, when the birds' voices were sweet, and the spires and pinnacles of the palace were flushed with rose. But perhaps it was most beautiful in the moonlight, for then the lawns were washed with silver and flecked with exquisite shadows, and the river, singing a lullaby in its sleep, held the stars entangled among the rushes, and rocked them all together.

It was while the moonlight still flooded the palace garden, that a boat now slid between islands of bending rushes, now floated into soft darkness under willow trees, and again emerged where the stream ran free, a silver pathway bordered by forget-me-nots and the tall spikes of willow herb.

A faint splash of oars broke the silence of the night, and the gentle lap and ripple of water. The rower sat upright and, as the boat moved on, looked from side to side over the moon-charmed garden, with the alert glance of one who revisits a familiar scene. Sometimes, in passing a big tree or a wooded glade, or at some particular bend of the river, a quick smile sprang to his lips, the smile which only happy memory brings. And so for hours, while the Princess danced in her lighted palace, the boat floated down the river

under the faint stars The great trees dreamt on the lawns, asleep in pools of shadows The air thrilled with the voices of nightingales, the river sang to the dream-stars hidden deep in its waters, and the moon rained light through all the sky Then the hush became more profound The nightingales ceased to sing, the moonlight grew dim Darkness fell, and a profound silence, in which

"In the meantime, Amelotte was sitting in her bedroom, whither after the ball she had retired"
From a drawing by S H Sime

every leaf, every blade of grass, listened—listened intently and waited. The rower drew in his oars and waited too Slowly, gradually, into the blackness there stole a ghostly grey. It spread and widened, and presently the garden lay newly enchanted in the earliest glimmer of dawn, In the dim half-light, a little glade was visible, which sloped from the hillside almost to the river's edge, and while the rower sat watching the trees taking shape out of the darkness, the air grew suddenly sweet with the scent of flowers—with the perfume of lilies and roses. Almost at the same moment he noticed that the glade was full of dim thronging figures. Every now and then he caught a glimpse of stately forms, white of limb, gold of hair; of others with rose-flushed faces and garments of fluttering green And he heard their voices, which sounded like the sighing of wind-stirred leaves. But mingled with the tones of the flower fairies there were other and different voices · some wild, like the startled cry of birds, some mocking, some mischievous, some altogether evil. Straining his eyes to find whence these sounds came, he could only see dimly, in the ghostly light, indefinite forms, shadowy flying things with whirring wings and bright restless eyes. The glade was full of perfume and colour and mingled whispering voices, so confusing that only a little

of their meaning reached the listener's brain, and only disjointed, incoherent sentences remained to his after recollection.

"Her birthday," said the Spirit of the lilies. "We gave her beauty, her white body, her golden hair."

"*But they are snares. We have made them snares,*" laughed the evil voices.

"We gave her life and charm, and power to love," whispered the rose fairies.

"*Ah! but we lay curled up in the heart of your roses—and we laughed, we laughed!*" answered the mocking voices.

"She should have grown sweet and calm and simple, as we grow in the quiet sunshine," sighed the lilies.

"*But we would not let her rest! We could not let her rest!*" came the answer of the wild, startled things.

And so the confused sighing and whispering and crying went on, in the glade where years ago the Princess had been christened.

And as he looked at the swaying, restless throng, and saw its glitter and colour and perfume, its terror, its ugliness, and its beauty, and as he heard the murmur of its many voices, the listener in the boat said, half aloud, "Oh, my poor little Princess! It makes things difficult when the fairies come to the christening!"

For some minutes he sat with downcast eyes, thinking very hard about many things, and when at last he raised his head there were streaks of amber light in the east, the birds had begun to sing, and, except for one or two rabbits who were early risers, the glade was empty. But only for a moment. There was a rustling in the tall bracken which grew near the water's edge, it was pushed aside, and between its branching fronds stood the Princess, her white gleaming dress thrown over one arm, her little white shoes drenched with dew.

She started, and then stood quite still, looking at the man in the boat.

"I thought one of the lily fairies had come back," he said at last, softly.

She looked puzzled at first, and then suddenly smiled. "Do you think so now?"

"No," he returned, meeting her glance.

"Why not?"

"Because of the sprites in your eyes."

At this she laughed aloud. "Who are you?" she asked.

"I am a Discoverer."

"But are you a prince?"

"*You* must be the discoverer now."

"That's rather a good idea," said the Princess thoughtfully.

"I am full of them," he returned.

"You are trespassing, as I suppose you know," observed the Princess, with dignity.

"Certainly. It is one of my best ideas."

"What have you come for?" she demanded weakly.

"For you."

The Princess gasped. "But I don't know you."

"That doesn't matter. No one knows any one. But if you mean you've never seen me before——Oh! you silly Lottchen!"

Amelotte started violently. Only one person had ever called her by that name, and he was the forester's little boy, with whom she used to play, and from whom, after angry tears and wild protests, she had at length been parted.

"*Hugo!*" she cried, and coming down to the water's edge she perched herself on the branch of a tree which overhung his boat.

"I told you I should come back one day and take you to my kingdom. Did you forget?"

"Your kingdom? I didn't know you had a kingdom," faltered the Princess.

"I've made one," returned the Discoverer grimly. "Come!" and he held out his hand.

The Princess drew back in dismay. "Oh! but this is ridiculous!" she protested.

The Discoverer shrugged his shoulders. "We'll discuss it if you please, but it's waste of time," he said.

"I don't in the least know what you're like now!" declared Amelotte. "You were a very annoying little boy," she added.

"You were a most exasperating little girl, and I'm sure you haven't improved," he replied. "On the whole, I think my risk is greater than yours."

"You are not polite!"

"No," Hugo readily agreed.

"Would you trust me?" began Amelotte, with the air of a princess of noble character.

"Quite as much as you trust yourself."

And Amelotte hung her head.

"Then all at once he sprang on to the bank, put his arms round her and kissed her lips."
From a drawing by S. H. Sime.

"Would you be jealous of me?" she went on after a moment, in a different voice.

"Yes. But no more jealous of you than you will be of me."

Amelotte began to feel interested, but all she said was a rather faint "Oh!"

"I don't think you're the ideal of a young prince at all," she added.

"I'm quite sure I'm not. Think how you would hate me if I were."

Amelotte smiled in spite of herself, and Hugo laughed outright. "Don't be a humbug," he said.

"You'd be shocked if I wasn't," she murmured, looking down at the points of her shoes.

"A Discoverer is never shocked. He makes too many discoveries."

"I don't think I should be *bored* with you," said the Princess slowly.

"You must admit that's something."

The Princess gave a long sigh, and looked at him with troubled eyes.

"Should I find blue roses in your kingdom?" she asked.

"No," said the Discoverer gently. "But there will be nothing to prevent you from looking for them."

"You wouldn't think me mad?" asked the Princess in surprise.

"No," replied Hugo, "I shall know you can't help it. The fairies came to your christening."

Amelotte looked long at the Discoverer, and the longer she looked the more she liked him. But still she hesitated.

Then all at once he sprang on to the bank, put his arms round her, and kissed her lips. "Will you come now?" he asked.

"Yes," said the Princess promptly, and stepped into the boat beside him.

Hugo laughed as he pushed off from the shore, and just at that moment the sun's rim appeared above the horizon.

Higher and higher it rose, till the river was a golden pathway between its fringes of willow-herb and forget-me-not, and the Princess's hair was as golden as the river, and her dress shone whiter than the lilies, as the boat darted towards the sunrise.

In the palace there was naturally great commotion at first. The Queen wept and blamed the King. The King kept out of the way as much as possible, and took things quietly. The old nurse sighed and lamented the christening. But as nothing lasts long, and no one's affairs are of much importance, except to themselves, the palace settled down in time, and in the Discoverer's self-made kingdom the Princess was as happy as any one who seeks blue roses has the right to expect.

Photo by R. H. Preston, Penzance

THE NINETEEN MERRY MAIDENS.

BY CHARLES MARRIOTT.

"DANCING on a Sunday! I think 'pon that, mrssie—a passel o' heathenish young wimmen, all turned to stone; and there they are this minnit."

Mr. Dan'l Prowse did not look the sort of person to indulge in fairy tales. He had a large yellow face fringed with white whiskers, small grey eyes, a long obstinate upper lip, and a wide straight mouth, at this moment pursed up impressively as he pointed to the invisible maidens with the stub of a dinner-knife. Joyce recognised, in passing, that it was his likeness to a benevolent Jack-in-the-box which first attracted her to him. This resemblance was carried out by his jerky gait (for Mr. Prowse was slightly lame), his sudden appearances from nowhere in particular, and fortuitous connection with the general life of the farm. When he was not milking he seemed always, as now, to be peeling potatoes.

Putting Mr. Prowse's veracity on one side, there undoubtedly were the Maidens, a grey sisterhood set in a circle as a warning to all men in the well-frequented field where the footpath ran from Chûn Chapel to Adrian Churchtown. Joyce had been dying to hear the story ever since the day she drove with Aunt Eleanor in a Jersey car from Porthlew station to their farmhouse lodgings at Chengwyn, "the windy house" on the downland overlooking Rosewithan Cove. Their driver showed his newness to the job by merely naming features of interest as they passed them, without risking his memory of the guide-book legends. He pointed out the ancient wayside crosses, "the holed stone," and just before they turned off the main road down the lane to Chengwyn, jerked his head to the left and said, "There are the Nineteen Merry Maidens," flourished his whip to the right and added in the tone of one come to the end of his obligations, "and there are the Pipers."

Aunt Eleanor, who sat with closed eyes recovering from the long railway journey, merely said, "Oh!" and Joyce, who was perhaps the one person never deceived by Aunt Eleanor's theoretical fondness for country life, and practical indifference to everything outside the pages of a book, forbore to prompt the question she herself was too shy to ask.

Only to-day she had reached that stage of intimacy with Mr. Dan'l Prowse which made the question possible; and he, with a scandalised memory of a doll's tea-party on the preceding Sunday, had responded with alacrity and a moral purpose. Now, the worst of pointing a moral to adorn a tale is that you never know its application by weaker brethren.

Joyce sat down on the upturned potato basket, arranged Jessie Penelope so that as fellow-culprit she should lose nothing of edification, rested her pointed chin on her hand, and, fixing her large grey eyes on Dan'l's face, inquired: "How long have they been there, Mr. Prowse?"

"Ivver since good John Wesley come down here to convert the Druids from worshipping their idol gods, I reckon."

"Well," she said, "how was it the Pipers had time to run so far?"

Joyce was not incredulous, but she wanted to be quite sure that she was not doing the Pipers an injustice.

Dan'l stooped and carefully picked out another potato from the basket between his knees.

"I expect," he said thoughtfully, "there was a clap of thunder, or maybe John

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Wesley himself looked auver the hedge, and the Pipers knawed they was doing wrong and so put up their pipes and jailed off. But they weren't quick enough to escape the Wrath—not by no manner o' means," he concluded firmly, flinging the potato into the bowl of water by his side.

"They were bigger than the Maidens?" Joyce suggested.

"Yes, s'pose," said Dan'l, with a quick glance out of the corner of his eye. "I've nivver measured 'em, but they do say as the tallest is close'pon seventeen foot high."

The moral was not quite what Mr. Prowse intended. Clearly, the responsibility was the Pipers', and Joyce felt a burning contempt for their cowardice. She pictured them as long, lean men, clad in decorous black, with features trained to a preposterous gravity, yet with a sly twinkle in their eyes indicating a willingness to kick over the traces on safe occasions. They were probably, she thought, Local Preachers. Perhaps the name of John Wesley gave the cue to this conception of their character, or it may have been Joyce's memory of last week's Bible-class picnic down in the Cove, when cackling girls stood in a circle—just like the Maidens—while a band played, and solemn young men of obviously official importance seemed to enjoy themselves very humanly.

Exactly why Local Preachers of John Wesley's day were also Pipers, Joyce did not consider, though she had a distinct memory of the words "We have piped, but ye have not danced," coming through the open windows of Chûn chapel in emotional tones on a hot Sunday morning as she passed down the lane with Aunt Eleanor. She had a clear vision of this dreadful business of the Maidens. It must have happened just as the people had come out of morning chapel, the older folk in front discussing the sermon and tracking the scent of their Sunday dinner homewards. Then the nineteen Maidens—probably the Chapel choir—linked arm in arm, with bent heads giggling and whispering, and every now and then tossing back their hair and turning, as girls of any age will, to throw teasing glances over their shoulders at two mahogany-featured men with roving eyes in otherwise immovable faces, dressed in closely buttoned black and with pipes tucked under their arms, freshening their lips with blades of grass after their labours of the morning. Somehow the pipe and tabor seemed to fit in with Joyce's conception of chapel service, like the words "Bethel," "Mizpah," and "Hermon."

So the girls swished along on a bright May morning, the daisies drubbing their little feet already dancing to the measure of young blood newly released from the preacher's periods, until they came to the stile. Then what more natural than that they should seat themselves, some on the stile, some on the hedge, like a bevy of butterflies settling on a cabbage field—edging and sidling and spreading their muslin skirts so that the Pipers could pass only with embarrassment, or, better still, would be forced to wait for a gossip? The giggling and whispering subsided, of course, as the Pipers approached, in a tense moment, for who should first say "'Tis a beautiful morning." The Pipers came up glancing furtively under their black brows, while the girls, now haughtily unaware of them, studied the daisies or fingered ribbons or, one or two, relenting, moved their skirts an inch aside as if to say "You can pass if you please, sirs."

The Pipers, looking sourer for embarrassment, kicked at the grass, until one of them, unable any longer to bear the silence, from sheer shyness breathed down his pipe a bar or two of a hymn tune—and, really, some of the chapel tunes were very like dances—and one of the girls hummed absent-mindedly while picking at the yellow lichen with her finger nail, and another tapped time with her foot on the stile, till the Piper, encouraged, strayed into a flourish. Then the other, not to be outdone, took his pipe, and before you could say "Jack Robinson" there were the girls out in the field swinging madly round to the tune of "Ring a Ring of Roses," while the Pipers leaned against the hedge putting all they knew of secular skill into their throbbing black pipes.

Meanwhile good John Wesley, having stayed behind for private meditation, had locked the chapel door, and with his hands behind his back was slowly picking his way across the field to his lodgings at St. Adrian. Joyce knew what John Wesley was like, for was not her little bedroom at the farm filled with his pictures?—"John Wesley as an Infant being saved from the Burning Rectory," "John Wesley Preaching," and the very

public "Death of John Wesley" before a mixed and agitated audience. Undoubtedly John Wesley pricked up his ears and looked over the hedge—and there floated into Joyce's mind Moses with the Tables of Stone—stone seemed to be in it, anyhow. Possibly he shouted "Hi!" and the girls didn't bear him, though the Pipers did "sure 'nuff," as Mr. Prowse would say, and without calling "*Cave!*" put up their pipes, ducked under the hedge, and lit out across the field. She could see them tumbling over into the road, hesitating for a moment which way to run, and finally with a yelp up the hedge and stooping across the moor.

And John Wesley stood with his long white hair and whiter bands fluttering, his mild features inflamed with anger, his arms uplifted calling down the Wrath, while the hapless girls, singing "Ring a Ring of Roses" and so not missing the Pipers, circled round and round in a heedless ecstasy.

Then the awful thunder-clap out of the cloudless blue, and the ring of girls fallen apart like a broken wreath and struck to stone, the song dead on their lips, leaning this way and that with the swing of the dance in their frozen attitudes. And the Pipers, too, stiffening as they ran hot-foot and slanting down the valley.

That, thought Joyce, coming out of her reverie with a jerk, was the redeeming feature of the whole miserable business; and in spite of his cruelty she gave John Wesley every credit for a sportsmanlike fairness. Quite likely he afterwards regretted his hasty anger—just as Moses did after he had broken the Tables of Stone—and she pictured him stirring uneasily in his warm bed on winter nights while the bitter wind howled under the eaves and the rain lashed the windows, thinking about the nineteen poor girls out in the weather, and wishing he could call back the Wrath.

Couldn't he?

Joyce went red all over, and she drew in her breath with a gasp. Of course John Wesley couldn't, now, because he was dead, but—— She glanced furtively at Mr. Prowse as he sat purring to himself over the moral effect of his narrative, and was minded to ask him a question. Experience, however, told her the advantage of oblique methods in matters of real moment, so she got up from the basket, smoothed down her pinafore, arranged Jessie Penelope's bonnet, and said: "Well, thank you very much, Mr. Prowse. I must go in for my milk and biscuits now, but I'll come and talk to you to-morrow."

During rice-pudding time Joyce warily questioned Aunt Eleanor about Druids. Aunt Eleanor put down her spoon, settled her pince-nez, folded her hands and said "Extraordinary child!" which was Aunt Eleanor's way, and explained why Joyce, wanting mother who lay sick in London, preferred to open her mind to practical persons like Mr. Dan'l Prowse. However, as usual when asked to explain things, Aunt Eleanor seemed pleased, and told Joyce all about Stonehenge and mistletoe and wicker cages and human sacrifices. The information, obviously out of books, did not account for John Wesley, though Aunt Eleanor certainly let slip the live detail that the circle in the next field but one was called the *Dawns myn*, which means the Dancing Stones.

After dinner Joyce took Jessie Penelope for a constitutional round the fields in artfully narrowing circles, like a bird avoiding its nest, until she presently reached and sat down by the Maidens. Mr. Prowse's story made all the difference in the look of them. There was no doubt whatever about their girlhood, and already Joyce recognised characteristic faces and figures unconsciously borrowed from girls she knew: thick Martha, tall bending Rose, and little Phœbe with the wet blue eyes. Joyce felt a special tenderness towards the stone Phœbe, smaller than her sisters, who shrank away from the footpath as if she felt the condemnation of passers-by. She walked slowly round, touching the stones in turn: they felt very stiff and hard, poor dears, and it must have been torture to keep still in this weather, with the gorse pricking and purring in the hot sunshine while the larks invited every living thing to come a-dancing.

A thrill of indignant pity shook her little body, and she again went round the circle, kissing the stone girls and murmuring, "Never mind, never mind! I'll stop and play with you." But since games that cannot be shared are apt to become tiresome, she presently left Jessie Penelope to keep her new friends in courage, fetched Andersen and read them *The Wild Swans*. Joyce did not wish to excite vain hopes in the bosoms of the stone

maidens, but it was just as well that they should be reminded of possibilities. She tried not to show any favour, and read a bit to each in turn, but because Phœbe was the littlest she was garlanded with daisy chains.

The next day Mr. Prowse was made to feel as if he had thrust his blunt fingers into a gossamer web alive and growing, and now dared not draw them out for fear of doing irreparable injury. The child's very first question—"Supposing anybody was being punished for doing wrong and you wanted to help them, would it be any use asking God?"—showed him how deeply he was implicated. In his younger days, and before he went lame, Dan'l had followed the sea, and the present situation appealed to him in nautical terms. Here was the little maid driving before her imagination on the lee shore of his Nonconformity. There were three things to be done: let her pile-up disastrously, bring her to sharply with a stubborn refusal to express an opinion, or wear her off by a series of prevarications; Dan'l wore.

"Dead or alive, missie?" he asked, screwing up his eyes with a look of great cunning.

"Well, if they were dead?" said Joyce falteringly.

Mr. Prowse hesitated for a moment, pursed up and straightened his mouth, and then, with an inward groan and apprehensive glance round for possible eavesdroppers, forswore his most vital convictions. "Cudden do no harm," he stoutly said.

Then she led him deeper, and talked mysteriously of sacrifice. Her backward searching in memories of fairy tales and the Bible had brought her to the interesting conclusion that whereas in the former, from *Perseus* to *The Wild Swans*, if you wanted to remove spells, or punishment, you had to do something, in the latter you had to suffer, to give something up. She reminded Mr. Prowse of Abraham and Isaac.

"You see," she said, hugging Jessie Penelope a little closer, "the ram did every bit as well, and I suppose if it had been a ram that Abraham had brought up as a pet it would have been better still." And Mr. Prowse, giving up all hope of catching her meaning, unhesitatingly agreed.

The same afternoon, while Aunt Eleanor was developing photographs in the cupboard under the stairs, which was her way of enjoying what she called "the glorious breath of the sea," Joyce made off to the Maidens, bearing Jessie Penelope, that last and dearest child, a twist of straw, a dinner knife and a box of matches. It seemed to her that the Maidens thrilled at her coming, and that a whisper of hope ran round the circle.

The rites began with prayer, Joyce kneeling in the midst with hands upraised after the manner of John Wesley. She said "Our Father" and the Creed, and sang "Now the day is over," which, though not quite appropriate, was the most suitable hymn she knew. Then followed a solemn dance, with arms extended, in and out and round every stone of the circle. Joyce had a strong suspicion that she ought to move in the opposite direction from that in which the maidens danced so as to unwind the spell, and in order to make certain she tried both ways in succession. She believed that she was taking a great risk, and kept feeling her arms and legs for any signs of stiffness. At the end of the dance her head swam, and she sat on the heaving ground half hoping that more would not be required of her. The stones lurched a little, but made no other sign; only Phœbe's daisy chain of yesterday stirred in the wind. In her heart of hearts, and dearly as she loved Jessie Penelope, Joyce knew that she would have felt cheated if the sacrifice had not been wanted. So, pressing a last kiss on Jessie Penelope's smiling mouth, she took the knife into her trembling hand and turned away her head.

Nobody knows until they've tried how a doll struggles under the knife, or what cries of agony rend her sawdust bosom. And, worst of all, when Joyce let fall the knife and looked round, there was Jessie Penelope's severed head staring up at her with eyes that refused to shut, owing to that cynical device which controls a doll's tenderest expression from below the waist by hideous wires and springs.

When it was all over, and only a little pile of ashes sent up a thin spiral of smoke with a terribly human smell of burning wax, Joyce pressed her hands over her ears, shut her eyes tight and cowered for the thunder-clap.

None came, but Aunt Eleanor did at a run and wanting explanations.

"What's this?" she asked, frowning

short-sightedly and poking at the ashes with the tip of her brown boot

"That was Jessie Penelope," said Joyce sorrowfully, yet with a triumphant sense of irremediable mischief.

There was no denying the fact, even if Joyce had wished to do so, but giving reasons was quite another matter. Aunt Eleanor was kindness itself, but she couldn't see things, and worst of all had read books and formed ideas about the child mind. The tangled web of Joyce's consciousness did not perplex her in the least, but the child herself had a quite unresentful though fiercely self-protective knowledge of the impassable gulf between them. She parried all questions with "Oh, Aunt Eleanor, I can't tell you," until, made ashamed by Aunt Eleanor's indelicacy she burst into angry tears. Then, of course, followed a lecture on frankness and confidence in one's elders—which, as Joyce knew, was only retaliation for baffled curiosity—and she was taken by the hand and led indoors for the further wholesome discipline of brooding over her crushing sense of incompetence and failure.

"Joyce is the quaintest child," wrote Aunt Eleanor to her sister that evening, "and it is a real pleasure to me to watch her mind unfolding. You know how often I have argued that the games of children are always unconsciously educational? Well, here's an example—also, by the way, an illustration of the duty of making things quite clear to the child mind. Clear ideas make straightforward actions. Yesterday at dinner Joyce asked me about the Druids. I did the best I could out of my too scanty knowledge of the customs, religion, etc., of our prehistoric ancestors. How these little people make us feel our ignorance, don't they? Joyce was interested—I wish you could have seen her drinking it in—but said nothing. This afternoon I happened to look out of the window, and to my horror there was Joyce squatting on her heels over a small bonfire. When I reached the place—a stone circle in one of the fields (have I sent you a photograph, by the way?)—there was nothing but a heap of ashes and a tell-tale odour of burning rag and wax. A little tactful questioning elicited the information that Jessie Penelope had been cremated! Beyond that nothing. Joyce is a dear girlie, but I confess I was just the weeniest bit disappointed. Of course I saw *at once* what had happened. Thanks to yesterday's lecture, Joyce had been practising Druidical rites! The whole thing was so quaint and charming that I was dreadfully upset at having to talk a *little* seriously about matches and things. I'm sorry to say there were a few tears, but the little woman has quite recovered."

Joyce's recovery took the form of a headache, sickness, and a feverish night. With daylight came disillusion: one glance out of the window showed her the Nineteen Maidens stark in the grey dawn—so lifeless, indeed, that jackdaws danced contemptuously upon their heads and little rabbits played hide-and-seek about their feet. Breakfast was such a dismal failure that Aunt Eleanor prescribed a day indoors, and consequently Joyce did not get an opportunity to talk to Mr. Dan'l Prowse until the morrow.

Kitchen-door confidences had made Mr. Prowse aware of the burning of Jessie Penelope; and Joyce's indisposition following so closely upon her theological discussion with himself gave him an uneasy sense of responsibility. Mr. Prowse was a good Wesleyan, but he was also a gentleman, and he saw clearly that having, though with the best intentions in the world, got a lady into a caudle, he must get her out again. He first thought of confiding his share in the matter to Aunt Eleanor, but mistrusted the intelligence of a young woman who commended the cows for giving milk. Still, to say the thing which was not went sorely against the grain. In telling the story of the Maidens he had merely repeated a folk tale not even peculiar to that neighbourhood, but the sequel which Joyce's peace of mind evidently demanded would require invention which was not only difficult but sinful. While awaiting developments Mr. Prowse compromised with his conscience by making certain preparations, so that in case of necessity he should not be taken at a loss.

The sight of Joyce, peaky and childless, blinking in the sunshine, swept away his last scruple. Dan'l cocked one eye at the sitting-room window, pursed up his wide mouth mysteriously, and beckoning Joyce to follow him, limped across the townplace into the cowshed. He did not speak until the child had made herself comfortable on a bundle of hay.

"Ded 'ee hear 'em?" he asked.

"Who?" said Joyce, whitening, and with a little gasp.

Dan'l raised his hand and let it fall with the gesture of one converted from lifelong incredulity. "None other than the Nineteen Merry Maidens," he said firmly.

"Are they gone?" cried Joyce, jumping to her feet.

Mr Prowse motioned her back. "Now you set still, missie," he said coaxingly, "and I'll tell you all about 'em."

"But I saw them there this morning," said Joyce, with a puzzled look, as she nestled down again in the hay.

"No, you didden," said Mr. Prowse triumphantly; "you saw the *stones*, sure 'nuff, jest as you might see the body of a man when his soul has gone round land. Howsomever," he continued, in a tone which implied that for his part she might take it or leave it, "this is all I knaw about it. The night before last jest after I had got into bed I heerd a knacking at my front door. I flung up the window and called, but nobody answered, so I lit the candle and went downstairs and opened the door, and there stood a young woman in a shally-go-naked gown and buckle shoes, looking that whisht that I was 'most scared to death. 'Who ar'ee, my dear?' said I. 'I'm called Wilmot Trevaskis,' she answered, her teeth chattering. Now to my sartain knowledge," said Mr. Prowse impressively, "there hasn't bin a Wilmot hereabouts for years and years, though it ded used to be a very common name in these parts. 'What can I do for 'ee, then?' I axed; and she whispered, all of a tremble, 'Can 'ee tell me where John Wesley do bide?' That took me on a nupshot, as you may reckon, and I says 'My dear life! John Wesley's bin dead more'n a hundred years.' With that she begun to cry bitterly and wring her hands. 'What shall I do? what shall I do?' she said. 'all the others have gone away and left me wandering.' 'All which others?' I axed, for though I begun to see how the land lay I weren't going to be took in, not by no manner o' means. 'The other eighteen,' she says, and then I knawed who she was, sure 'nuff. 'Come inside, tben,' I said, for I dedn't want nobody to see me talking to a strange young woman at that time o' night——"

"Was she big or little?" interrupted Joyce eagerly. Mr. Prowse glanced warily at her out of the corner of his eye.

"Smallish," he said in a judicious tone "from what I remember of them maidens I should say she would be the smallest of the lot."

"Go on," said Joyce, nodding excitedly.

"Well, she come inside the parlour," continued Mr. Prowse, "and I put the board in the hole and set a cheer for her, and as she sot down I saw that she was carrying a book. 'What ar'ee wanting with John Wesley?' I axed. 'To set me free from the Wrath,' she answered. Then I began to consider what would be the reason of her being left behind, and she so small that she couldn't have bin worse than the others. Now I'd heerd my grandmother say as a body can't rest quiet that died with anything about 'em that belonged to another person, so I cast my eye auver her as she sat there, and presently I see a string o' daisies round her neck."

"Oh!" cried Joyce, clasping her hands, "I never thought of that."

"I didn't say nawthin," said Mr. Prowse with a complacent smile, "but I ketched hold and pulled. The string come away without breaking . . . and that maid went out like the flame of a candle. There was I standing alone in the middle of the parlour with the string o' daisies in my hand!" He felt carefully in his pocket and brought out a withered daisy chain. "And there tes now!" he said, shutting his mouth with a snap.

Joyce drew a deep breath.

"I'm so glad," she said, but no more. Mr. Prowse limped slowly to the door. There, he glanced round, and, not entirely satisfied with her expression, came back again. He had hoped to hedge a little with conscience, but now saw that it was no use. With the quick movement of one who suddenly remembers, he thrust his hand into his pocket and produced a small black book.

"I forgot to tell 'ee," he said, "that when the maid went out she left this behind her."

He gave the book, "Sacred Songs by Charles and John Wesley," into Joyce's hands. She turned over the yellow, musty-smelling leaves, came to the title page, and, loyally ignoring that a name had been carefully erased, read aloud "Wilmot Trevaskis, her Book."

"Terrible good ink they used in them days," purred Mr. Prowse, avoiding her eye and rubbing his chin complacently.

THE MAN WHO WENT TOO FAR.

BY E. F. BENSON.

THE little village of St. Faith's nestles in a hollow of wooded hill upon the north bank of the river Fawn, in the county of Hampshire, huddling close—as if for spiritual protection against the fays and fairies, the trolls and "little people," who might be supposed still to linger in the vast empty spaces of the New Forest—round its grey Norman church. Once outside the hamlet, you may walk in any direction (so long as you avoid the high road which leads to Brockenhurst) for the length of a summer afternoon without seeing sign of human habitation, or possibly even catching sight of another human being. Shaggy wild ponies may stop their feeding for a moment as you pass, the white scuts of rabbits will vanish into their burrows, a brown viper perhaps will glide from your path into a clump of heather, and unseen birds will chuckle in the bushes—but for a long day you may easily see nothing human. But you will not feel in the least lonely in summer, at any rate, the sunlight will be gay with butterflies, and the air thick with all those woodland sounds which, like instruments in an orchestra, combine to play the great symphony of the yearly festival of June. Winds whisper in the birches and sigh among the firs, bees are busy with their redolent labour among the heather, a myriad birds chirp in the green temples of the forest trees, and the voice of the river prattling over stony places, bubbling into pools, chuckling and gulping round corners, gives you the sense that many presences and companions are near at hand.

Yet, oddly enough, though one would have thought that these benign and cheerful influences of wholesome air and spaciousness of forest were very healthful comrades for a man—in so far as nature can really influence this wonderful human genus which has in these centuries learned to defy her most violent storms in its well-established houses, to bridle her torrents and make them light its streets, to tunnel her mountains and plough her seas—the inhabitants of St Faith's will not willingly venture into the forest after dark. For in spite of the silence and loneliness of the hooded night, it seems that a man is not sure in what company he may suddenly find himself; and though it is difficult to get from these villagers any very clear story of occult appearances, the feeling is widespread. One story, indeed, I have heard with some definiteness—the tale of a monstrous goat that has been seen to skip with hellish glee about the woods and shady places; and this perhaps is connected with the story which I have here attempted to piece together. It too is well known to them: for all remember the young artist who died here not long ago—a young man, or so he struck the beholder, of great personal beauty, with something about him that made men's faces to smile and brighten when they looked on him. His ghost, they will tell you, "walks" constantly by the stream and through the woods which he loved so, and in especial it haunts a certain house, the last of the village, where he lived, and its garden, in which he was done to death. For my part, I am inclined to think that the terror of the forest dates chiefly from that day. So, such as the story is, I have set it forward in coherent form. It is based partly on the accounts of the villagers, but mainly on that of Darcy, his friend and mine.

The day had been one of untarnished midsummer splendour, and as the sun drew near to its setting, the glory of the evening grew every moment more crystalline, more miraculous. Westward from St. Faith's the beechwood, which stretches for some miles toward the heathery upland beyond, already cast its veil of clear shadow over the red roofs of the village; but the spire of the grey church, overtopping all, still pointed a flaming orange finger into the sky. The river Fawn, which runs below,

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lay in sheets of sky-reflected blue, and wound its dreamy devious course round the edge of this wood, where a rough two-planked bridge crossed from the bottom of the garden of the last house in the village, and communicated by means of a little wicker gate with the wood itself. Then, once out of the shadow of the wood, the stream lay in glorious deep pools of crimson from the sunset, and lost itself in the haze of woodland distances.

This house at the end of the village stood outside the shadow, and the lawn, which sloped down to the river, was still flecked with sunlight. Garden-beds of dazzling colour lined its gravel walks, and down the middle of it ran a brick pergola, half-hidden in clusters of rambler-rose and purple with starry clematis. At the bottom end of it, between two of its pillars, was slung a hammock containing a shirt-sleeved figure.

The house itself lay somewhat remote from the rest of the village, and a footpath leading across two fields, now tall and fragrant with hay, was its only communication with the high-road. It was low-built, only two stories in height, and, like the garden, its walls were a mass of flowering roses. A narrow stone terrace ran along the garden-front, over which was stretched an awning, and on the terrace a young silent-footed manservant was busied with the laying of the table for dinner. He was neat-handed and quick with his job, and having finished it he went back into the house, and appeared again with a large rough bath-towel on his arm. With this he went to the hammock in the pergola.

"Nearly seven, sir," he said.

"Has Mr. Darcy come yet?" asked a voice from the hammock.

"No, sir."

"If I'm not back when he comes, tell him that I'm just having a bathe before dinner."

The servant went back to the house, and after a moment or two Frank Halton struggled to a sitting posture and slipped out on to the grass. He was of medium height and rather slender in build, but the supple ease and grace of his movements gave the impression of great physical strength: even his descent from the hammock was not an awkward performance. His face and hands were of very dark complexion, either from constant exposure to wind and sun, or, as his black hair and dark eyes tended to show, from some strain of Southern blood. His head was small, his face of an exquisite beauty of modelling, while the smoothness of its contour would have led you to believe that he was a beardless lad still in his teens. But something, some look which living and experience alone give, seemed to contradict that, and finding yourself completely puzzled as to his age, you would next moment probably cease to think about that, and only look at this glorious specimen of young manhood with wondering satisfaction.

He was dressed as became the season and the heat, just in a shirt open at the neck and a pair of flannel trousers, and his head, covered very thickly with a somewhat rebellious crop of short curly hair, was otherwise bare, as he strolled across the lawn to the bathing-place that lay below. Then for a moment there was silence, then the sound of splashed and divided waters, and presently after a great shout of ecstatic joy, as he swam up stream with the foamed water standing in a frill round his neck. Then, after some five minutes of glorious struggle with the flood, he turned over on his back and with arms outstretched floated down-stream, ripple-cradled and inert. His eyes were shut, and between half parted lips he talked gently to himself.

"I am one with it," he said to himself—"the river and I, I and the river. The coolness and splash of it are I, and the water-herbs that wave in it are I also. And my strength and my limbs are not mine, but the river's. It is all one—all one, dear Fawn."

A quarter of an hour later he appeared again at the bottom of the lawn, dressed as before, his wet hair already drying into its crisp short curls again. There he paused a moment, looking back at the stream with the smile with which men look on the face of a friend, then turned towards the house. Simultaneously his servant came to the door leading on to the terrace, followed by a man of some thirty-five to forty years of age. Frank and he saw each other across the bushes and garden-beds, and, each quickening his step, they met suddenly face to face round an angle of the garden walk, in the fragrance of syringa.

"My dear Darcy," cried Frank, "I am charmed to see you."

But the other stared at him in amazement. "Frank!" he exclaimed

"Yes, that is my name," he said, laughing. "What is the matter?"

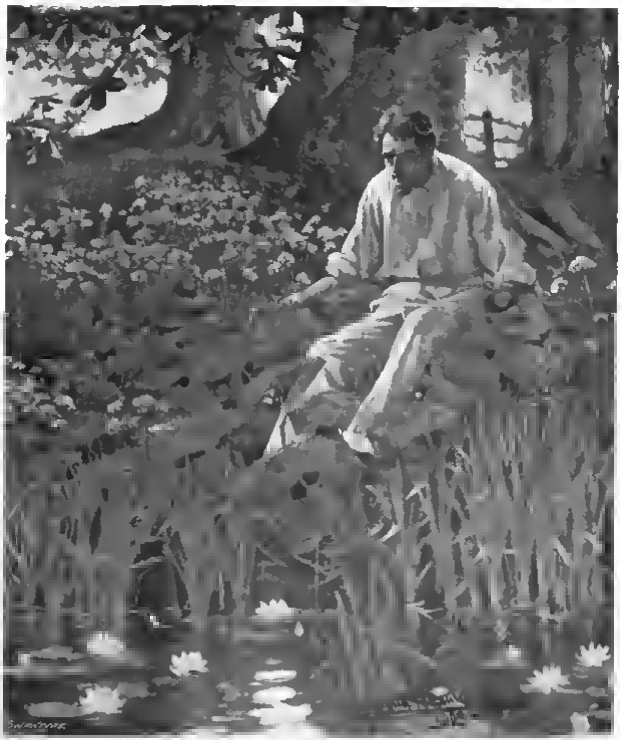
Darcy took his hand. "What have you done to yourself?" he asked. "You are a boy again."

"Ah, I have a lot to tell you," said Frank. "Lots that you will hardly believe, but I shall convince you—— "

He broke off suddenly, and held up his hand. "Hush: there is my nightingale," he said

The smile of recognition and welcome with which he had greeted his friend faded from his face, and a look of rapt wonder took its place, as of a lover listening to the voice of his beloved. His mouth parted slightly, showing the white line of teeth, and his eyes looked out and out till they seemed to Darcy to be focussed on things beyond the vision of man. Then something perhaps startled the bird, for the song ceased

"Yes, lots to tell you," he said "Really, I am delighted to see you. But you look rather white and pulled down



"'Well, as I sat there, doing nothing but just listening'" (p. 164).

no wonder, after that fever. And there is to be no nonsense about this visit. It is June now: you stop here till you are fit to begin work again. Two months at least."

"Ah, I can't trespass quite to that extent."

Frank took his arm, and walked him down the grass. "Trespass? Who talks of trespass? I shall tell you quite openly when I am tired of you, but you know when we had the studio together, we used not to bore each other. However, it is ill talking of going away on the moment of your arrival. Just a stroll to the river, and then it will be dinner-time."

Darcy took out his cigarette-case, and offered it to the other.

Frank laughed. "No, not for me. Dear me! I suppose I used to smoke once. How very odd!"

"Given it up?"

"I don't know. I suppose I must have. Anyhow, I don't do it now. I would as soon think of eating meat."

"Another victim on the smoking altar of vegetarianism?"

"Victim?" asked Frank. "Do I strike you as such?"

He paused on the margin of the stream, and whistled softly. Next moment a moorhen made its splashing flight across the river, and ran up the bank. Frank took it very gently in his hands, and stroked its head as the creature lay against his shirt.

"And is the house among the reeds still secure?" he half-crooned to it. "And is the missus quite well, and are the neighbours flourishing? There, dear—home with you," and he flung it into the air.

"That bird's very tame," said Darcy, slightly bewildered.

"It is rather," said Frank, following its flight.

During dinner Frank chiefly occupied himself in getting up to date in the movements and achievements of this old friend whom he had not seen for six years. Those six years, it now appeared, had been full of incident and success for Darcy: he had made a name for himself as a portrait painter which bade fair to outlast the vogue of a couple of seasons, and his leisure time had been brief. Then some four months previously he had been through a severe attack of typhoid, the result of which, as concerns this story, was that he had come down to this sequestered place to recruit.

"Yes, you've got on," said Frank at the end. "I always knew you would. A R A, with more in prospect. Money? You roll in it, I suppose, and—and oh, Darcy, how much happiness have you had all these years? That is the only imperishable possession. And how much have you learned? Oh, I don't mean in Art. Even I could have done well in that."

Darcy laughed. "Done well? My dear fellow, all I have learned in these six years you knew, so to speak, in your cradle. Your old pictures fetch huge prices. Do you never paint now?"

Frank shook his head. "No, I'm too busy," he said.

"What do you do, then? That's what every one is for ever asking me."

"Do? I suppose you would say I do nothing."

Darcy glanced up at the brilliant young face opposite him. "It seems to suit you, that way of being busy," he said. "Now it's your turn. Do you read? Do you study? I remember you saying that it would do us all—all us artists, I mean—a great deal of good if we would study any one human face carefully for a year, without recording a line. Have you been doing that?"

Frank shook his head again. "I mean exactly what I say," he said. "I have been *doing* nothing. And I have never been so occupied. Look at me: have I not done something to myself, to begin with?"

"You are two years younger than I," said Darcy—"at least, you used to be. You therefore are thirty-five. But had I never seen you before, I should say you were just twenty. But was it worth while to spend six years of greatly occupied life in order to look twenty? Seems rather like a woman of fashion."

Frank laughed boisterously. "First time I've ever been compared to that particular bird of prey," he said. "No, that has not been my occupation—in fact, I am only very rarely conscious that one effect of my occupation has been that. Of course it must have been, if one comes to think of it. It is not very important. Quite true my body has become young. But that is very little,—I have become young."

Darcy pushed back his chair and sat sideways to the table, looking at the other.

"Has that been your occupation, then?" he asked.

"Yes, that anyhow is one aspect of it. Think what youth means! It is the capacity for growth: mind, body, spirit—all grow, all get stronger, all have a fuller, firmer life every day. That is something, considering that every day that passes after one reaches maturity weakens, in the rest of manhood, their hold on life. A man reaches his prime, and remains, we say, in his prime for ten years, or perhaps twenty. But after his primest prime is reached he slowly, insensibly weakens. There are the signs of age in you—in your body, in your art probably, in your mind. You are less electric than you were. But I, when I reach my prime—I am nearing it—ah, you shall see!"

The stars had begun to appear in the blue velvet of the sky, and to the east the horizon seen above the black silhouette of the village was growing dove coloured with the approaching moonrise. White moths hovered dimly over the garden beds, and the footsteps of night tiptoed through the bushes. Suddenly Frank rose. "Ah, it is the supreme moment!" he said softly. "Now, more than at any other time, the current of life, the eternal imperishable current, runs so close to me that I am almost enveloped in it. Be silent a minute."

He advanced to the edge of the terrace and looked out, standing stretched with arms outspread. Darcy heard him draw a long breath into his lungs, and after many seconds expel it again. Six or eight times he did this, then turned back into the lamplight. "It will sound to you quite mad, I expect," he said, "but if you want to hear the soberest truth I have ever spoken, and shall ever speak, I will tell you. But come into the garden if it is not too damp for you. I have never told any one yet, but I shall like to tell you. It is long, in fact, since I have even tried to classify what I have learned."

They wandered into the fragrant dimness of the pergola, and sat down. Then Frank began.

"Years ago—do you remember?" he said, "we used often to talk about the decay of joy in the world. Many things, we settled, had contributed to it—things good and things bad. Among the things good I put what we may call the Christian virtues: renunciation, resignation, sympathy with suffering, and the desire to relieve sufferers. But out of those things spring very bad ones: useless renunciation, asceticism for its own sake, mortification of the flesh with nothing to follow—no corresponding gain, that is—and that awful and terrible disease which devastated England some centuries ago, and from which by heredity of spirit we suffer now—Puritanism. That was a dreadful plague; the brutes held and taught that joy and laughter and merriment were evil. It was a doctrine the most profane and wicked. Why, what is the commonest crime one sees? A sullen face. That is the truth of the matter.

"Now all my life I have believed that we are intended to be happy, that joy is of all gifts the most divine. And when I left London, abandoned my career, such as it was, I did so because I intended to devote my life to the cultivation of joy, and, by continuous and unsparing effort, to be happy. Among people, in human intercourse, I did not find it possible; besides, there were too many distractions among people, and also too much suffering. So I took one step backwards or forwards, as you may choose to put it, and went straight to nature—to trees, birds, animals, to all those things which quite clearly pursue one aim only, which blindly follow the great native instinct to be happy, without any care at all for morality or human law or divine law. I wanted, you understand, to get all joy first-hand and unadulterated; and I think it scarcely exists among men—it is obsolete."

Darcy turned in his chair. "Ah, but what makes birds and animals happy?" he asked. "Food—food and mating."

Frank laughed gently in the stillness. "Do not think I became a sensualist," he said. "He surely carries his miseries pick-a-back, and round his feet is wound the shroud. I may be mad, it is true, but I am not so stupid, anyhow, as to have tried that. No; what is it that makes puppies play with their own tails, that sends cats on their prowling, ecstatic errands at night?"

He paused a moment. "So I went to nature," he said. "I sat down here in this New Forest, sat down fair and square, and said 'Please.' That was my first difficulty—to sit here quiet without being bored, to wait without being impatient, to be receptive and very alert: though for a long time nothing particular happened.

The change, in fact, was slow in those early stages."

"Nothing happened?" asked Darcy rather impatiently, with the sturdy revolt against any new idea, which to the English mind is best labelled "nonsense." "Why, what in the world *should* happen?"

Now Frank, as he had known him, was the most generous but most quick-tempered of mortal men; in other words, his anger would flare to a prodigious beacon under almost no provocation, only to be quenched again under a gust of no less impulsive kindliness. Thus the moment Darcy had spoken, an apology for his hasty question was half-way up his tongue. But there was no need for it to have travelled even so far, for Frank laughed again, with kindly, genuine mirth.

"Oh, how I should have resented that a few years ago!" he said. "Thank goodness that—resentment—is one of the things I have got rid of. I certainly wish that you should believe my story—in fact, you are going to—but that you at this moment should imply that you do not, does not concern me."

"Ah, your solitary sojournings have made you inhuman," said Darcy, still very English.

"No—human," said Frank. "Rather more human at least, rather less of an ape.

"Well, that was my first quest," he continued, after a moment—"the deliberate and unswerving pursuit of joy. As far as motive went, I daresay it was purely selfish; but as far as effect goes, it seems to me about the best thing one can do for one's fellow-creatures, for happiness is more infectious than smallpox. So, as I said, I sat down and waited: I looked at happy things, I rigorously avoided the sight of anything unhappy, and by degrees a little trickle of the happiness of this glorious world began to filter into me. The trickle grew more abundant; and now, my dear fellow, if I could for a moment divert from me into you one half of the torrent of joy that pours through me day and night, you would throw the world, art—everything—aside, and just live, exist. When a man's body dies, it passes into trees and flowers. Well, that is what I have been trying to do with my soul before death."

The servant had brought into the pergola a table with syphons and spirits, and had set a lamp upon it. As Frank spoke he leaned forward towards the other; and Darcy, for all his matter-of-fact common-sense, could have sworn that his companion's face shone, was luminous in itself. His dark brown eyes glowed from within, the unconscious smile of a child irradiated and transformed his face. Darcy felt suddenly excited, exhilarated.

"Go on," he said; "go on. I can feel you are somehow telling me sober truth. I daresay you are mad; but I don't see that that matters."

Frank laughed again. "Mad?" he said. "Yes, certainly, if you wish. But I prefer to call myself sane. However, nothing matters less than what one chooses to call things. God never labels His gifts. He just puts them into our hands.

"So by the continual observance and study of things that were happy," continued he, "I got happiness, I got joy. But seeking it, as I did, from nature, I got much more which I did not seek, but which I stumbled upon originally by accident. It is difficult to explain, but I will try.

"About three years ago I was sitting one morning in a place I will show you to-morrow. It is down by the river brink, very green, very full of shade and sun, and the river passes there through some little clumps of reeds. Well, as I sat there, doing nothing, but just looking and listening, I heard the sound quite distinctly of some flute-like instrument playing a strange unending melody. I thought at first it was some musical yokel on the highway, and did not pay much attention. But before long the strangeness and indescribable beauty of the tune struck me. It never repeated itself, but it never came to an end: phrase after phrase ran its sweet course; it worked gradually and inevitably up to a climax, and having attained it, it went on—another climax was reached, and another, and another. Then, with a sudden gasp of wonder, I localised where it came from. It came from the reeds, and from the sky, and from the trees. It was everywhere: it was the sound of life. It was, my dear Darcy, as the Greeks would have said, it was Pan playing on his pipes—the voice of Nature."

Darcy was far too interested to interrupt, though there was a question he would have liked to ask; and Frank went on.

"Well, for the moment I was terrified—terrified with the impotent horror of nightmare; and I stopped my ears and just ran from the place, and got back to the house panting, trembling, literally in a panic. Unknowingly, for at that time I only pursued joy, I had begun, since I drew my joy from Nature, to get in touch with Nature. Nature, force, God—call it what you will—had drawn of the one thing in the world which has real existence. No wonder its manifestation was withdrawn."

"And after six months?"

"After six months, one blessed morning I heard the piping again. I wasn't afraid that time. And since then it has grown louder, it has become more constant. I now hear it often, and I can put myself into such an attitude towards nature that

"And putting his fingers in his ears, he fled at full speed down the street" (p. 167).

across my face a little gossamer web of essential life. I saw that when I emerged from my terror, and I went very humbly back to where I had heard the Pan-pipes. But it was nearly six months before I heard them again."

"Why was that?" asked Darcy.

"Surely because I had revolted, rebelled, and above all been frightened. For I believe that, as there is nothing in the world which so injures one's body as fear, so there is nothing that so much shuts up the soul. I was afraid, you see, the pipes will almost certainly sound. And never yet have they played the same tune: it is always something new, something fuller, richer, more complete than before."

"What do you mean by 'such an attitude towards nature'?" asked Darcy.

"I can't explain that, but by translating it into a bodily attitude it is this."

Frank sat up for a moment quite straight in his chair, then slowly sank back with arms outspread and head drooped.

"That," he said: "an effortless attitude, but open, resting, receptive."

Then he sat up again.

"One word more," he said, "and I will bore you no further. Nor, unless you ask me questions, shall I talk about it again. You will find me, in fact, quite sane in my mode of life. Birds and beasts you will see behaving somewhat intimately to me, like that moorhen, but that is all. I will walk with you, ride with you, play golf with you, and talk with you on any subject you like. But I wanted you on the threshold to know what has happened to me. And one thing more will happen."

He paused again, and a slight look of fear crossed his eyes.

"The final revelation," he said—"the complete and blinding stroke which will throw open to me, once and for all, the full knowledge, the full realisation and comprehension that I am one, just as you are, with life. On that day, so I take it, I shall see Pan. It may mean death—the death of my body, that is—but I don't care. It may mean immortal, eternal life lived here and now and for ever. Then having gained that, ah, my dear Darcy, I shall preach such a gospel of joy, showing myself as the living proof of the truth, that Puritanism, the dismal religion of sour faces, shall vanish like a breath of smoke, and be dispersed and disappear in the sunlit air. But first the full knowledge must be mine."

Darcy watched his face narrowly. "You are afraid of that moment," he said.

Frank smiled at him. "Quite true; you are quick to have seen that. But when it comes I hope I shall not be afraid."

For some little time there was silence; then Darcy rose. "You have bewitched me, you extraordinary boy," he said. "You have been telling me a fairy story, and I find myself saying, 'Promise me it is true.'"

"I promise you that," said the other.

"And I know I shan't sleep," added Darcy.

Frank looked at him with a sort of mild wonder, as if he scarcely understood. "Well, what does that matter?" he said.

"I assure you it does. I am wretched unless I sleep."

"Of course I can make you sleep if I want," said Frank, in a rather bored voice.

"Well, do."

"Very good: go to bed. I'll come upstairs in ten minutes."

Frank busied himself for a little after the other had gone, moving the table back under the awning of the verandah and quenching the lamp. Then he went, with his quick silent tread, upstairs and into Darcy's room. The latter was already in bed, but very wide-eyed and wakeful; and Frank, with an amused smile of indulgence, as for a fretful child, sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Look at me," he said, and Darcy looked. "The birds are sleeping in the brake," said Frank softly, "and the winds are asleep. The sea sleeps, and the tides are but the heaving of its breast. The stars swing slow, rocked in the great cradle of the heavens, and——" He stopped suddenly, gently blew out Darcy's candle, and left him sleeping.

Morning brought to Darcy a flood of hard common-sense, as clear and crisp as the sunshine that filled his room. Slowly, as he woke, he gathered together the broken threads of the memories of the evening, which had ended in a common piece of hypnotism. That accounted for it all: the whole strange talk he had had was just a spell of suggestions from the extraordinary, vivid boy who had once been a man; all his own excitement, his acceptance of the incredible, had been merely the effect of a stronger, more potent will imposed on his own. How strong that will was he guessed from his own instantaneous obedience to Frank's suggestion of sleep. And, armed with impenetrable common-sense, he came down to breakfast. Frank had already begun, and was consuming a huge plateful of porridge and milk with the most prosaic and healthy appetite.

"Slept well?" he asked.

"Yes, of course. Where did you learn hypnotism?"

"By the side of the river."

"You talked an amazing quantity of nonsense last night," remarked Darcy.

"Rather. I felt quite giddy. Look! I remembered to order a dreadful daily paper for you. You can read about money markets or politics or cricket matches."

Darcy looked at him closely. In the morning light Frank looked even fresher, younger, more vital than he had the night

before, and the sight of him somehow dinted Darcy's armour of common-sense.

"You are the most extraordinary fellow I ever saw," he said. "I want to ask you some more questions."

"Ask away," said Frank.

For the next day or two Darcy plied his friend with many questions, objections and criticisms on his theory of life, and gradually got out of him a coherent and complete account of his experience. In brief, then, Frank believed that "by lying naked," as he put it, to the force which controls the passage of the stars, the breaking of a wave, the budding of a tree, the love of a youth and maiden, he had succeeded in a way hitherto undreamed of in possessing himself of the essential principle of life. Day by day, so he thought, he was getting nearer to, in closer union with, the great power itself which caused all life to be—the spirit of nature, of force, or the spirit of God. For himself, he confessed to what others would call paganism: it was sufficient for him that there existed a principle of life. He did not worship it, he did not pray to it, he did not praise it. Some of it existed in all human beings, as it existed in trees and animals; to realise and make living to himself that it was all one was his sole aim and object.

Here perhaps Darcy would put in a word of warning. "Take care," he said: "to see Pan meant death, did it not?"

Frank's eyebrows would rise at this. "What does that matter?" he said. "True, the Greeks were always right, and they said so; but there is another possibility. For the nearer I get to it, the more living, the more vital and young I become."

"What, then, do you expect the final revelation will do for you?"

"I have told you," said he. "It will make me immortal."

But it was not so much from speech and argument that Darcy grew to grasp his friend's conception, as from the ordinary conduct of his life. They were passing, for instance, one morning down the village street, when an old woman, very bent and decrepit, but with an extraordinary cheerfulness of face, hobbled out from a cottage.

Frank instantly stopped when he saw her. "You old darling! How goes it all?" he said.

But she did not answer; her dim old eyes were riveted on his face, she seemed to drink in like a thirsty creature the beautiful radiance which shone there. Suddenly she put her two withered old hands on his shoulders. "You're just the sunshine itself," she said; and he kissed her and passed on.

But scarcely a hundred yards farther a strange contradiction of such tenderness occurred. A child running along the path towards them fell on its face, and set up a dismal cry of fright and pain. A look of horror came into Frank's eyes, and, putting his fingers in his ears, he fled at full speed down the street, and did not pause till he was out of hearing.

Darcy, having ascertained that the child was not really hurt, followed him in bewilderment. "Are you without pity, then?" he asked.

Frank shook his head impatiently. "Can't you see?" he asked. "Can't you understand that that sort of thing—pain, anger, anything unlovely—throws me back, retards the coming of the great hour? Perhaps when it comes I shall be able to piece that side of life on to the other, on to the true religion of joy. At present I can't."

"But the old woman—was she not ugly?"

Frank's radiance gradually returned. "Ah, no. She was like me. She longed for joy, and knew it when she saw it, the old darling."

Another question suggested itself. "Then what about Christianity?" asked Darcy.

"I can't accept it. At least, I can't accept that which makes suffering and sacrifice necessary. It was so: in some inscrutable way I believe it was so; but I don't understand how it was possible. So I leave it alone: my affair is joy."

They had come to the weir above the village, and the thunder of riotous cool water was heavy in the air. Trees dipped into the translucent stream with slender trailing branches, and the meadow where they stood was starred with midsummer blossomings. Larks shot up carolling into the crystal dome of blue, and a thousand voices of June sang round them. Frank, bare-headed as was his wont, with his coat slung over his arm and his shirt-sleeves rolled up above the elbow, stood there like some beautiful wild animal, with eyes half shut and mouth half open drinking in the scented warmth of the air.

Then suddenly he flung himself face downwards on the grass at the edge of the stream, burying his face in the daisies and cowslips, and lay stretched there in wide-armed ecstasy, with his long fingers pressing and stroking the dewy herbs of the field. Never before had Darcy seen him thus fully possessed by his idea: his caressing fingers, his half buried face pressed close to the grass, even the clothed lines of his figure, were instinct with a vitality that somehow was different from that of other men. And some faint glow from it reached Darcy—some thrill, some vibration from that charged recumbent body passed to him; and for a moment he understood as he had not understood before, despite his persistent questions and the candid answers they received, how real and how realised by Frank his idea was.

Then suddenly the muscles in Frank's neck became stiff and alert, and he half-raised his head. "The Pan-pipes, the Pan-pipes," he whispered. "Close—oh, so close!"

Very slowly, as if a sudden movement might interrupt the melody, he raised himself and leaned on the elbow of his bent arm. His eyes opened wider, the lower lids drooped as they droop when one focusses one's eye on something very far away, and the smile on his face broadened and quivered like sunlight on the water, till the exultance of its happiness was scarcely human, and his lips moved quietly. So he remained, motionless and rapt, for some minutes; then the look of listening died from his face, and he bowed his head satisfied.

"Ah, that was good," he said. "How is it possible you did not hear? Oh, you poor fellow!"

A week of such exclusively outdoor life as they led did wonders towards Darcy's recuperation, yet, as his normal activity and higher pressure of vitality returned, he seemed to himself to fall even more under the spell of the wonderful youth of the other. Twenty times a day he found himself saying to himself suddenly, at the end of some ten minutes' silent resistance to the absurdity of Frank's idea, "But it isn't possible: it can't be possible," and from the fact of his having to assure himself so frequently of this, he knew that he was struggling and arguing with a conclusion which already had taken root in his mind. For in any case a visible living miracle confronted him, since it was equally "impossible" that this youth, this boy trembling on the verge of manhood, was thirty-five. Yet such was the fact.

July was ushered in by a couple of days of blustering and fretful rain; and Darcy, unwilling to risk a chill, kept to the house. But to Frank the weather seemed a phenomenon imperceptible to human sensation, and he would spend his days exactly as he did under the suns of June—lying in his hammock, stretched on the dripping grass, or making huge rambling excursions into the forest, the birds hopping from tree to tree after him: to return in the evening drenched and soaked, but with the same unquenchable flame of joy burning within him.

"Catch cold?" he would ask: "I've forgotten how to do it, I think. I suppose it makes one's body more sensible always to sleep out-of-doors. People who live indoors always remind me of something peeled and skinless."

"Do you mean to say you slept out-of-doors last night in that deluge?" asked Darcy. "And where, may I ask?"

Frank thought a moment. "I slept in the hammock till nearly dawn," he said, "for I remember the light blinked in the east when I awoke. Then I went—where did I go?—oh yes, to the meadow where the Pan pipes sounded so close a week ago. You were with me, do you remember? But I always have a rug if it is wet." And he went whistling upstairs.

Somehow that little touch, his obvious effort to recall where he had slept, brought strangely home to Darcy the wonderful romance of which he was the still half-incredulous beholder. Sleep till close on dawn in a hammock, then the tramp—or probably scamper—underneath the windy and weeping heavens to the remote and lonely meadow by the weir! Then the picture of other such nights rose before him. Frank sleeping perhaps by the bathing-place, under the filtered twilight of the stars or the white blaze of moonshine, a stir and awakening at some dead hour, perhaps a space of silent wide eyed thought, and then a wandering through the hushed woods to some other dormitory, alone with his happiness, alone with the joy and the life that suffused and enveloped him, without other thought or desire or aim except the hourly and never-ceasing communion with nature.

"The birds hopping from tree to tree after him"

They were in the middle of dinner that night, talking on indifferent subjects, when Darcy suddenly broke off in the middle of a sentence. "I've got it," he said. "At last I've got it!"

"'Congratulate you," said Frank. "But what?"

"The ideal unsoundness of your idea. It is this: all nature, from highest to lowest, is full, crammed full of suffering; every living organism in nature preys on another; yet in your aim to get close to, to be one with, nature, you leave suffering altogether out: you run away from it, you refuse to recognise it. And you are waiting, you say, for the final revelation."

Frank's brow clouded slightly. "Well?" he asked, rather uneasily.

"Cannot you guess, then, what the final revelation will be? In joy you are supreme, I grant you that; I did not know a man could be so master of it. You have learned, perhaps, there, practically all that nature can teach. And if, as you think, the final revelation is coming to you, it will be the revelation of horror, suffering, death, pain in all its hideous forms."

Frank held up his hand. "Stop: let me think," he said.

There was silence for a long minute.

"That never struck me," he said, at length. "It is possible that what you suggest is true. Does the sight of Pan mean that, do you think? Is it that nature, take it altogether, suffers horribly, suffers to a hideous, inconceivable extent?"

He got up and came round to where Darcy sat. "If it is so, so be it," he said. "Because, my dear fellow, I am near, so awfully near, to the final revelation. To-day the pipes have sounded almost without pause. I have even heard the rustle in the bushes, I believe, of Pan's coming. I have seen—yes, I saw to-day the bushes held aside by a hand, and a piece of a face, not human, peered through. But I was not frightened—at least, I did not run away."

He took a turn up to the window and back again.

"Yes, there is suffering all through," he said, "and I have left it all out. Perhaps, as you say, the revelation will be that. And in that case, it will be good-bye. I have gone on one line. I shall have gone too far. My God, what horror!"

The rainy weather soon passed, and with the return of the sun Darcy again joined Frank in long rambling days. It grew extraordinarily hotter, and with the fresh bursting of life after the rain, Frank's vitality seemed to blaze higher and higher. Then, as is the habit of the English weather, one evening clouds began to bank themselves up in the west, the sun went down in a glare of coppery thunder mist, and the whole earth, broiling under an unspeakable oppression and sultriness, paused and panted for the storm. After sunset the remote fires of lightning began to wink and flicker on the horizon; but when bedtime came the storm seemed to have moved no nearer, though a very low unceasing noise of thunder was audible. Weary and oppressed by the stress of the day, Darcy fell at once into a heavy, uncomforting sleep.

He woke suddenly into full consciousness, with the din of some appalling explosion of thunder in his ears, and sat up in bed with racing heart. Then for a moment, as he pulled himself out of the panic-land which lies between sleeping and waking, there was silence, except for the steady hissing of rain on the shrubs outside his window. But suddenly that silence was shattered and shredded into fragments by a scream from somewhere close at hand outside in the black garden—a scream of supreme and despairing terror. Again and once again it shrilled up, and then a babble of awful words was interjected. A quivering, sobbing voice that he knew said, "My God, O my God! O Christ!" And then followed a little mocking, bleating laugh. Then there was silence again; only the rain hissed on the shrubs.

All this was but the affair of a moment, and without pause either to put on clothes or light a candle, Darcy was already fumbling at his door-handle. Even as he opened it he met a terror-stricken face outside—that of the man-servant, who carried a light.

"Did you hear?" he asked.

The man's face was bleached to a dull shining whiteness. "Yes, sir," he said; "it was the master's voice."

Together they hurried down the stairs and through the dining-room, where an orderly table for breakfast had already been laid, out on to the terrace. The rain for the moment had been utterly stayed, as if the tap of the heavens had been turned off; and under the lowering

black sky, not quite dark, because the moon rode somewhere serene behind the conglomerated thunderclouds, Darcy stumbled into the garden, followed by the servant with the candle. The monstrous leaping shadow of himself was cast before him on the lawn, lost and wandering odours of rose and lily and damp earth were thick about him, but more pungent was some sharp and acrid smell that suddenly reminded him of a certain châlet above Zermatt. In the blackness of the hazy light from the sky, and the vague tossing of the candle behind him, he saw that the hammock in which Frank so often lay was tenanted. A gleam of white shirt was there, as of a man sitting up in it, but across that there was an obscure dark shadow; and as he approached the acrid odour grew more intense.

He was now only some few yards away, when suddenly the black shadow seemed to skip into the air, and that being removed he could see quite clearly that a shirted figure sat up in the hammock. Something black and monstrous jumped across the lawn as he approached, and vanished close beside him in a rustle and stir of bushes. For one moment, from sheer terror of the unseen, he hung on his step, and the servant joining him they walked together to the hammock.

It was Frank. He was in shirt and trousers only, and he sat up there on braced arms. For one half-second he stared at them, his face a mask of horrible contorted terror. His upper lip was drawn back so that the gums of the teeth appeared, and his eyes were focussed not on them but on something quite close to him; his nostrils were widely expanded, as if he panted for breath, and terror incarnate and repulsion and deathly horror ruled dreadful lines on his smooth cheeks and forehead. Then even as they looked the body sank backwards, and the ropes of the hammock wheezed and strained.

Darcy lifted him out and carried him indoors. Once he thought there was a faint convulsive stir of the limbs that lay with so dead a weight in his arms, but when they got inside there was no trace of life. But the look of supreme terror and agony of fear had gone from his face: a boy tired with play but still smiling in his sleep was the burden he laid on the floor. His eyes had closed, and the beautiful mouth was in gentle curves, even as when a few mornings ago, in the meadow by the weir, it had smiled to the music of the unheard melody of Pan's pipes. Then they looked farther.

Frank had come back from his bathe before dinner that night in his usual costume of shirt and trousers only. He had not dressed, and during dinner, so Darcy remembered, he had rolled up the sleeves of his shirt to above the elbow. Later, as they sat and talked after dinner on the close sultriness of the evening, he had unbuttoned the front of his shirt, to let what little breath of wind there was play on his skin. The sleeves were rolled up now, the front of the shirt was unbuttoned, and on his arms and in the brown skin of his chest were strange discolorations, which grew momently more clear and defined, till they saw that the marks were pointed prints, as if caused by the hoofs of some monstrous goat that had leaped and stamped upon him.